

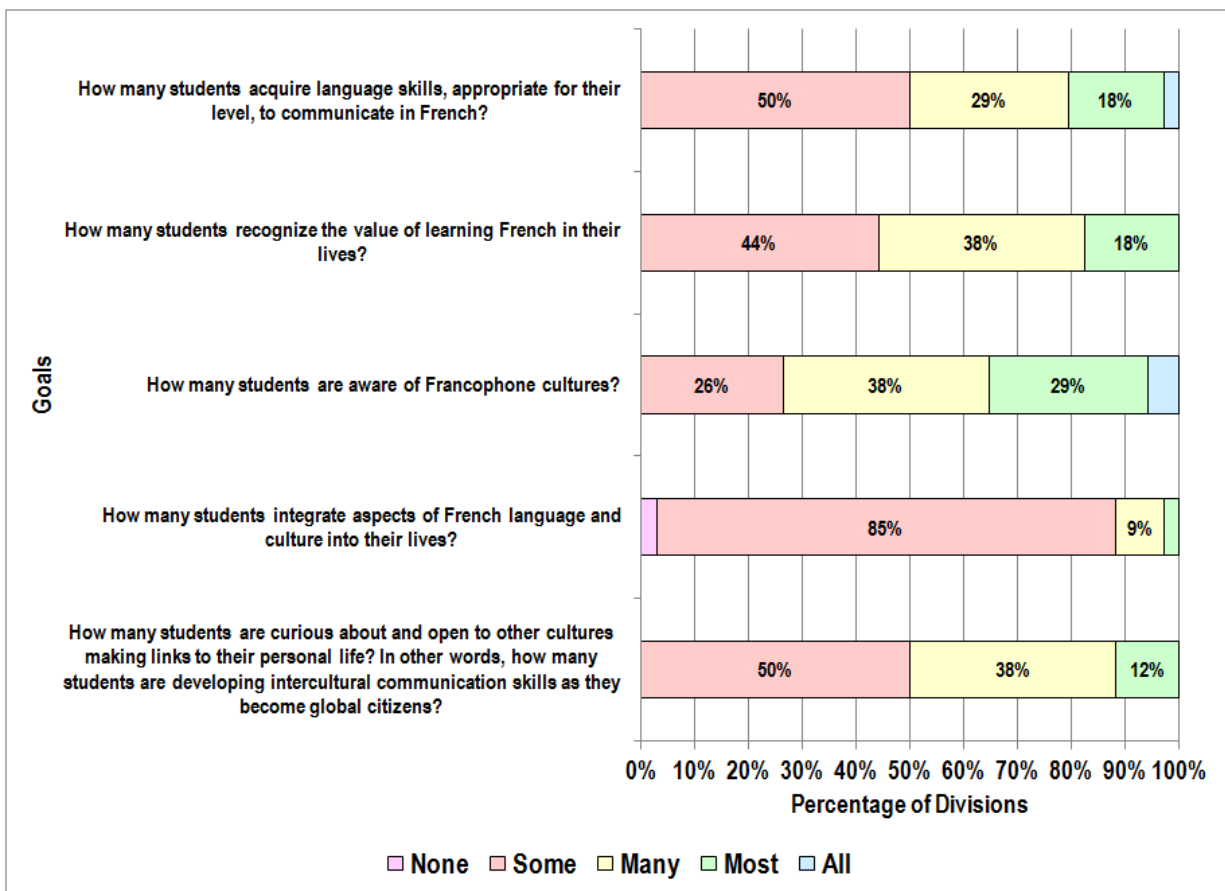
Conclusion: Final Reflection and Next Steps

At the end of the questionnaire, school divisions were asked to determine the extent to which their school division had been successful in the delivery of French courses and to determine next steps to improve student learning. They were asked to reflect and respond to a series of questions and then develop a divisional plan. The next four subsections highlight the data collected from this reflection.

Student Success

Question 14 is intended to determine if the vision and goals of the courses are being realized through student achievement. To evaluate students' overall experience and success in French courses, school divisions were asked to estimate how many students communicate in the French language, appropriate for their level and appreciate Francophone cultures based on the five following questions. The scale used for this estimation included the following choices: *None, Some, Many, Most or All*.

14. Indicate the extent to which your school division has been successful in achieving the vision of the French courses.



The data provided by school divisions is based on their professional judgement. For the purpose of this analysis, the indicator of success has been identified as the sum of *all, most* and *many*.

The first question school divisions had to address was the number of students they perceived as acquiring an appropriate level of linguistic competency for their grade level. The data indicates that 50% of students achieved an appropriate level of linguistic competency. It is concerning because this also means that the other 50% of students are not achieving success in this area. In order to improve these results, the teaching and learning of French needs to become more of a priority for teachers and administrators, with a focus on language acquisition for students.

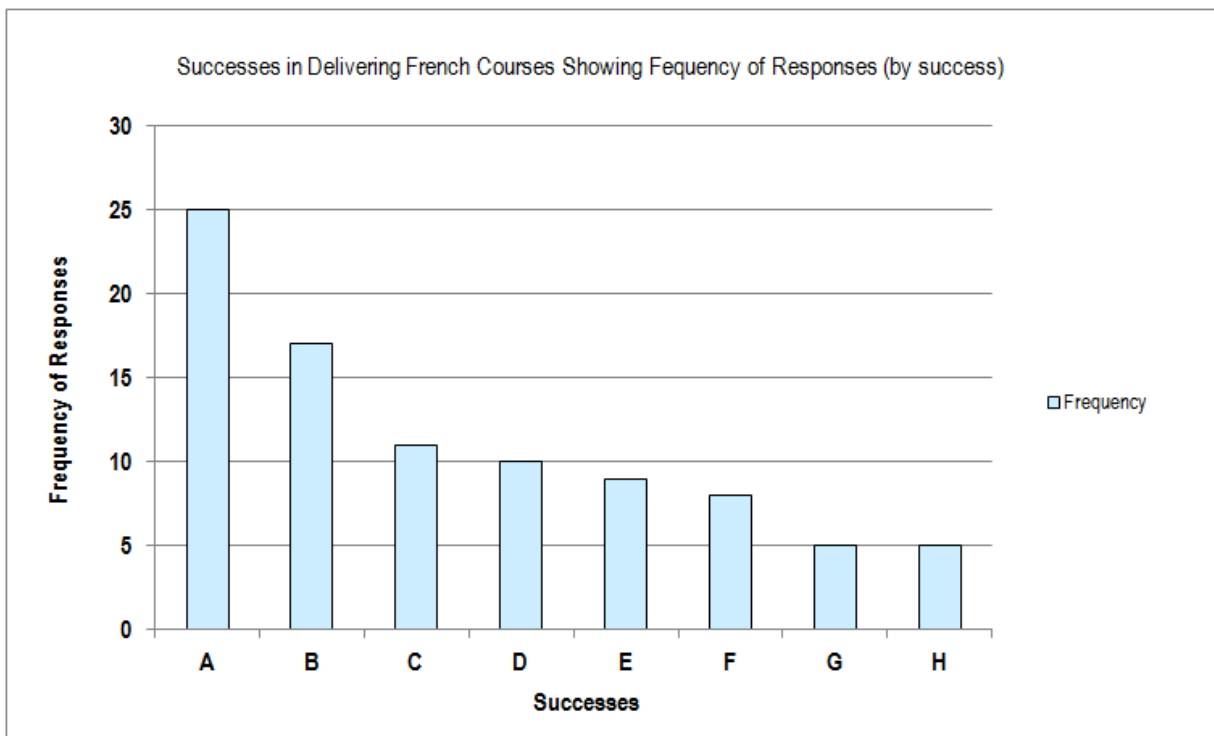
The second question was to discern the number of students who recognize the value of learning French. According to school divisions, 56% of students valued learning French in their lives. This percentage is also low and further inquiry could clarify if the message of valuing French is being addressed in meaningful ways to guide and engage students.

The next three questions are interrelated in term of their pedagogical implementation and are in essence an extension of one another. Question three was to estimate the number of students who are aware of Francophone cultures. The data indicates that 74% of students are exposed to Francophone cultures as they learn French. However, the assessment made in the fourth question regarding whether or not students integrate aspects of language and culture in their lives, indicated that only 12% of students are believed to be achieving this goal. This is a relatively new concept and it needs to be approached with the common understanding that it is simply an extension of students' knowledge of language and culture, and that it can be integrated into classrooms with relative ease. Developing this common understanding could be the starting point for future conversations about how to guide students to use French in relevant and meaningful ways in their lives.

Lastly, school divisions were asked to determine how many students demonstrate an openness and curiosity to other cultures as they become global citizens. The data indicated that 50 % of students are developing intercultural awareness. Once again, this goal is accomplished by further extending the understanding that language and culture are inextricably linked and that cultural awareness and intercultural understanding are integral parts of learning in the French classroom. To do this, students need opportunities to think about their own cultural beliefs and attitudes, to participate in cultural activities, and intercultural experiences and to reflect on their learning. This metacognitive reflection needs to have a more prominent place in the classroom in order to accomplish this goal.

Successes and Challenges

15. The following two charts depict the successes and challenges identified by school divisions in delivering French courses.



A - Appropriate professional support for teachers (professional learning, cohorts, coordinators)

B - Recognition of the value of learning French language and culture by students (increased motivation, enrolment, retention)

C - Many cultural experiences to support students in the development of their French language competencies and cultural awareness

D - Teacher motivation and commitment to improve their language skills and pedagogy

E - Implementation of the balanced literacy approach

F - Appropriate instructional resources including technology

G - Support of administrators for the teaching and learning of French (budget, professional learning, resources, timetabling, common prep time, etc.)

H - Recognition of the value of learning French language and culture by the community and parents

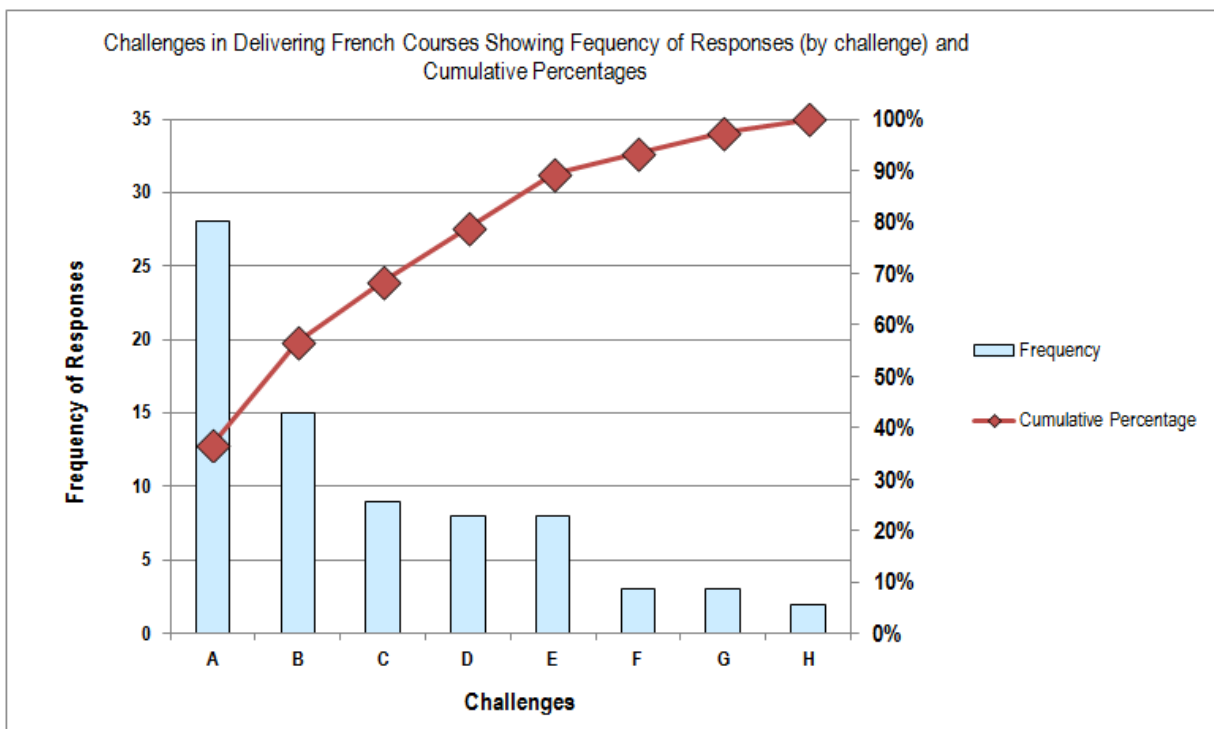
Additional information

Respondents indicated that the funding under the French Second Language Revitalization Program is essential to school divisions. It enhances the teaching and learning of French by supporting professional learning and enrichment for students.

School divisions perceive their two main successes to be professional support for teachers through professional learning, cohorts and divisional language coordinators (A – 25 responses) and the recognition of the value of learning French language and culture by students which increases motivation, enrolment and retention (B – 17 responses). It is encouraging to see that these two successes have been identified. It indicates that school divisions are supporting professional learning for teachers. They also recognize that student engagement is a key element to student success and retention in French courses and should be continuously nurtured.

Another identified success is providing students with many cultural experiences (C – 11 responses). This curricular goal is important as it validates and enriches students' language learning experiences. It also provides students with a context in which to develop their confidence and ease in speaking French both inside and outside of school and to develop their intercultural competencies.

The next five successes (D –H) related to teacher motivation, pedagogy, resources, school leadership and community support are also key components but have fewer responses. It is interesting to note that although these are successes for some, they are also perceived as challenges by other school divisions as seen in the next chart identifying challenges.



A - Limited teacher competencies (French language skills and methodology)

B - Offering French courses in certain contexts (lack of time K-8, competing with other options 9-12, small schools with low enrolment, lack of staff, maintaining sufficient student enrolment)

C - Rural isolation and lack of cultural learning opportunities

D - Conflicting professional learning opportunities for teachers

E - Lack of parental and community support

F - Lack of student engagement and motivation

G - High staff turnover

H - Lack of resources

The challenges identified by the school divisions are presented in the Pareto chart above. The Pareto Principle states that by addressing the factors that cause 80% of the challenges, strategies developed may become more focussed and resources may be allocated more effectively. As a result, most if not all of the remaining 20% of the challenges may also improve. The analysis of this data focuses on the challenges that need the most attention; those that represent a cumulative value of 80%.

The four challenges identified by school divisions which represent 80% of responses are: limited teacher competencies, offering French courses in certain contexts, rural isolation and conflicting professional learning opportunities.

The first challenge identified is that teachers do not have the necessary competencies, French language skills and/or methodology to teach the balanced literacy approach (A – 28 responses). This represents approximately 40% of all responses and is therefore the main challenge in the province with regards to teaching French in the English Program. Going forward, priority needs to be given to ongoing professional learning for teachers in Grades 4-12 to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to successfully deliver French courses. This could be addressed by conducting a portion of the hiring interview in French; by encouraging teachers to enrol in French classes; by asking teachers

who speak French to teach more than one class in the building (an exchange between teachers, K-8) and by requiring teachers to attend professional learning sessions.

The second challenge (B – 15 responses) revolves around students' access to French courses. The offering of French courses is often subjected to many roadblocks such as the idea that there is not enough time in the school day (K-8), that there is competition with other subject areas/options (9-12), and that small schools lack staff and/or have insufficient enrolment. Some of this challenge could be addressed with creative timetabling as mentioned above (exchange with another teacher) or by providing teachers with an example of how to better plan their classroom timetabling which may include integrating other subject (content) areas into French and using French in daily routines throughout the day. Another solution for improving students' access to French courses is to combine grade levels in order to have larger enrolment. Furthermore, it is important that the teaching and learning of French is valued among all staff and students, and that French is visible in the school.

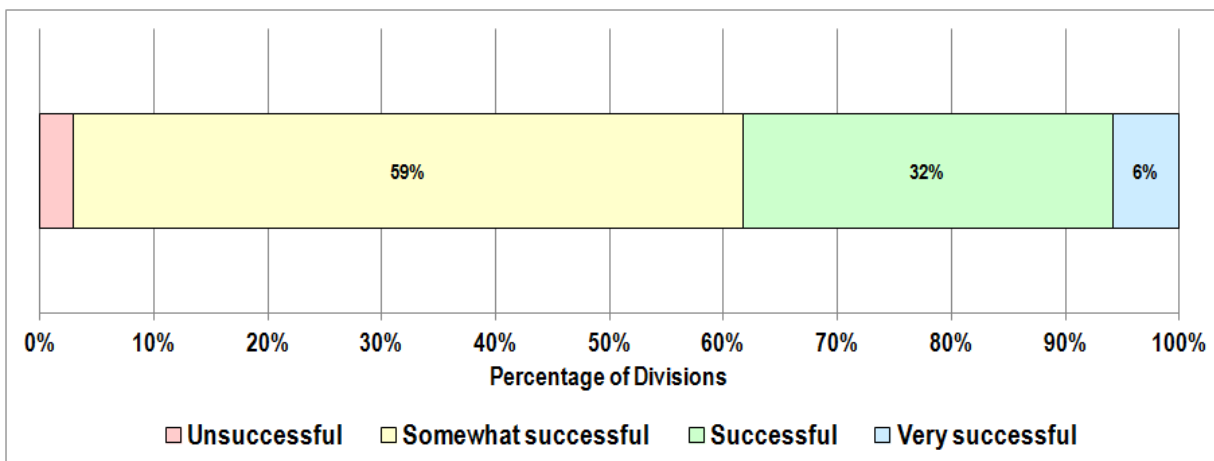
The third challenge, rural isolation and lack of cultural opportunities (C – 9 responses) and the fourth challenge, conflicting professional learning opportunities (D – 8 responses) have fewer responses but still fall under the 80% portion of the chart. The rural areas can look for neighbouring Francophone communities and team with them to find cultural activities for the students. Another option would be to submit a request for funding to the *French Language Revitalization Program* to bring culture to their communities. Furthermore, the integration of culture should not be seen as a separate unit; teachers should integrate cultural references on a regular basis by giving students the opportunity to observe Francophone cultures and make personal connections to their own cultures.

In regards to the fourth challenge, conflicts in professional learning opportunities, this is understandable in Grades 4-8 where teachers teach many curricular areas but nevertheless, it needs to be addressed. It is the professional responsibility of educators (superintendents, administrators and teachers) to ensure that educators have the appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes to successfully deliver French courses. The question to consider is *Is it possible for school divisions to begin to make this a priority?*

The other identified challenges within the chart that have fewer responses (E – H) should not be ignored but taken into consideration and reflected upon in each school division based on individual contexts. If the Pareto Principle is applied, these challenges may resolve themselves as the other main challenges are addressed.

Divisions' Self-Assessment on the Successful Delivery of French Courses

On a scale of 1 (unsuccessful) to 4 (very successful), please indicate the extent to which your school division ensures the successful delivery of French courses, which allows students to develop French communication skills.



School divisions were asked to indicate how successful they were in ensuring the delivery of French courses. The bar chart reveals that 38% of school divisions perceived themselves as being *successful* or *very successful* and 62% indicated that they were *somewhat successful* or *unsuccessful*. Although some successes were identified, this data is very concerning as it is clear that less than half of school divisions are successfully delivering French courses and achieving success with students. With a more concerted focus on building capacity through leadership and professional learning, school divisions can begin to improve their success rate in the delivery of French courses.

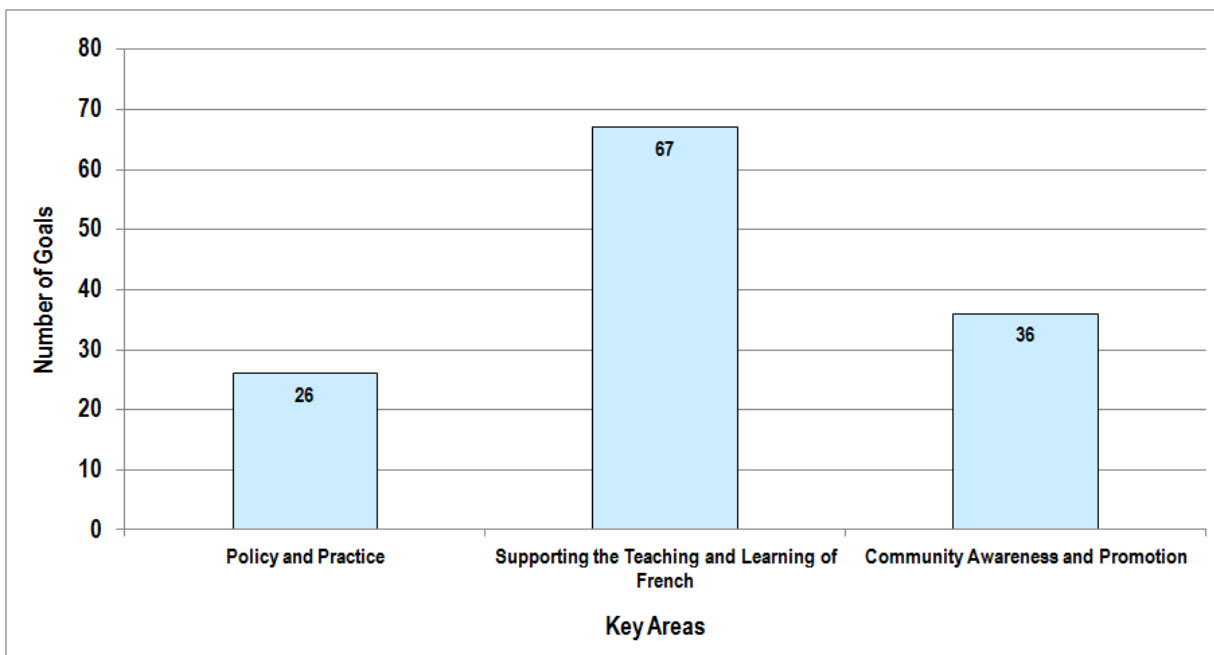
What are the possible ways to build capacity through leadership? School divisions can develop policies and practices for the teaching and learning of French in order to create a divisional culture and philosophy (e.g. hiring practices, roles and responsibilities and funding) which becomes the foundation for the successful delivery of French courses. They can ensure that information regarding the allocation of categorical grants is clearly communicated to principals and teachers throughout the division. The majority of school divisions are applying for *French Second Language Revitalization Grants* to enrich student learning; however, more attention should be drawn to ensuring that the provincial funding through *French Categorical Grant* reaches the classroom and is used for French. School divisions may also address the issue of student enrolment in Senior Years. Retention of students at high school merits more reflection as the enrolment drops significantly when French becomes an option. It is important to consider how the delivery of French from K-8 impacts this reality.

Keeping in mind student success as the primary goal, one must continually ask the question, how do we improve student results? How do we sufficiently engage students in learning French so that they acquire language competencies to communicate in French and wish to continue learning French when it becomes an option? The answer lies in ongoing professional learning for teachers. Without teachers who have the necessary competencies, language skills, cultural knowledge and understanding of the balanced literacy approach, this goal cannot be met. The focus in classrooms needs to be on student engagement and ongoing assessment for learning so that students make personal connections to learning French and are able to communicate in French in real and meaningful ways. To accomplish this, we need strong leadership. Leaders at the divisional and school levels who are willing to make this a priority, develop concrete plans, and ensure that teachers are supported. It is important that the whole school community values language learning and intercultural competencies as useful tools in the lives of all students.

Next Steps

After having completed the three sections of the questionnaire, reflecting on successes and challenges and making an overall assessment, school divisions were asked to identify which initiatives they would undertake to enhance the linguistic and educational experience for students to ensure the successful delivery of French courses. School divisions then set goals and outlined an action plan to build on successes and/or to address challenges. These initiatives were grouped into the three key areas: Policy and Practice, Supporting the Teaching and Learning of French, and Community Awareness and Promotion.

17. Under which key areas do your goals and actions fall?*



*Please note that school divisions could select more than one key area per initiative.

This chart shows that the largest number of initiatives (67) is found within the key area of *Supporting the Teaching and Learning of French*. This validates the recurring themes throughout this report which demonstrate the need to build teacher and administrator capacity, engage students and improve their language competencies, and develop an openness and appreciation of Francophone cultures. The above data clearly illustrates that this is the priority favoured by school divisions across the province to improve student success.

Policy and Practice (26), and *Community Awareness and Promotion* (36) play an important role and many initiatives have also been identified in these key areas. They also support the teaching and learning as they provide the foundation for divisional planning and hiring, and the message that French is valued for all students.

The table below summarizes the key initiatives proposed by school divisions. The initiatives are organized according to the 3 key areas of the questionnaire. The raw data found in the chart above was further analyzed and categorized into the key area that most accurately reflected the initiative. This explains the differences in the number of initiatives in each key area between the chart above and the table below. The common thread linking these initiatives is the commitment to ensure the successful delivery of French courses that allow students to acquire language competencies to communicate in French and to appreciate Francophone cultures.

Section 1 – Policy and Practice (26)
Divisional Planning (17) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop policy/guidelines for the teaching and learning of French for all students. Actions include mandating French Grades 4-8, defining roles and responsibilities, inclusion, funding • Develop a divisional action plan/steering committee • Foster grade level transitions via teachers meetings • Support by divisional coordinator
Hiring (7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the hiring of qualified teachers who speak French and are knowledgeable in current methodology
Advocacy (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform and educate trustees about issues relating to delivery of French courses • Present recommendations to senior administrators

Section 2 - Supporting the Teaching and Learning of French (67)

Building Teacher Capacity (28)

- Provide opportunities for teachers to attend PD sessions (teachers self evaluate to determine their needs): methodology, integration of culture, BEF assessment tool, DREF (resources)
- Offer support for new teachers of French
- Encourage ongoing development of language skills: Offer language classes
- Encourage collaboration for ongoing professional learning: PLC, mentorship, classroom observations, integrating of other subject areas, resources and materials

Develop an Openness and Appreciation of Francophone Culture (13)

- Integrate culture routinely in classroom activities; students make observations and personal connections to the aspects explored
- Create a greater presence of French resources in school libraries/classroom: books, films, music, magazines, technology

Improve Students' Language Competencies (10)

- Ensure that all students have regular opportunities to participate in conversations and thus develop the ability to communicate with confidence; track progress with continuum, language portfolio, BEF's assessment tool for oral communication
- Provide appropriate, relevant current resources; multimedia, print etc.
- Implement the BEF's oral communication assessment tool; provide corrective feedback - anecdotal comments, co created criteria

Building Administrator Capacity, Awareness, Value (9)

- Educate administrators on what the delivery of a quality literacy-based French course looks like: classroom visits, consultant guided conversations, testimonials
- Create admin cohort/discussion groups re: reintroducing French Language classes, timetabling assistance, best practices
- Develop guidelines for interviewing and hiring teachers
- Develop a framework for classroom observations and walkthrough, focused on appropriate pedagogical practice

Engaging Students (7)

- Provide a variety of cultural experiences to complement their language learning and extend their intercultural knowledge
- Build strong language foundations so students develop competence and confidence in French:
- Encourage students to reflect and talk about their progress and engagement: survey students about their ability to communicate orally, read, and write in French, their experiences with French and the benefits and advantages of learning French. Exit interviews with middle years students

Section 3 – Community Awareness and Promotion (31)

Enrolments and Retention of Students (12)

- Offer Early Start French
- Increase enrolment in SY: Track the # of students, timetabling
- Offer video conference classes for SY
- Provide opportunities for Grade 5 and 8 exit interviews
- Offer student information sessions in Grade 8
- Reintroduce French language classes to schools who have previously lost them
- Foster an interest in students to continue their French language education after high school

School Initiatives to Raise the Profile of French (11)

- Increase information available to parents (EAL Parents): website, articles in newsletters, divisional brochures, French educational opportunities for students
- Organize public events: celebrations of learning, open house, presentations at parent council meetings, cultural events for families
- Create visibility for French in schools: announcements, signage, assemblies, integration of the arts, physical education, music
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the benefits of learning languages, benefits for EAL students, conversations at Parent/Teacher conferences re: attitudes and competencies

Divisional Promotion (8)

- Develop promotional materials: divisional brochure, website, Kindergarten info kits, etc.
- Develop a communication strategy to effectively use the promotional materials; transition points, parent and student presentations