

CORE FRENCH PILOT PROJECT:

A Summary of the
Implementation Assessment

Prepared for the
Bureau de l'Education Francaise

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I. INTRODUCTION

The CORE French Pilot Project was implemented during the 1980-81 school year by the Bureau de l'Education Francaise (BEF). The pilot year was initiated in selected schools on the understanding that the participating Grade 4 classes would receive forty minutes of daily French instruction.

As part of the Pilot Project, the Research Branch was requested by the Bureau to undertake two related assessments. One assessment was to deal with the implementation process, while the other was to focus on the attitudes of the Grade 4 students towards various aspects of French culture and language. It is the Research Branch assessment of the implementation process which is the focus of this summary.

In order to assess the implementation of the CORE French Program the major participants were identified. These included the superintendents, principals, Grade 4 classroom teachers of CORE students, as well as the CORE French teachers involved in the Program. The Bureau de l'Education Francaise and the Research Branch agreed that the attitudes of these participants towards various aspects of the CORE French Pilot Year would form the basis of the Implementation Assessment. Areas of concern addressed by the Research Branch included: satisfaction with the Program; administrative concerns; selection of schools and students; staffing; support; inservicing and class size.

II. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following represents a summary of the highlights of the implementation assessment of CORE French. This summary is based on the more detailed analysis which appears in the full report.

A. Limitations

The reader should note the following limitations when reading this summary:

1. Responses from principals were gathered by using two different techniques: interviews and mailed questionnaires. Although the same instrument was used, responses might vary as a result of the different methodologies.
2. It was not possible to present the intended financial analysis, owing to different accounting procedures among divisions, as well as incomplete financial records.
3. Questionnaires were mailed to both teacher samples one to two months after responses were collected from superintendents and principals. Therefore, teacher responses were based on a longer exposure to the Pilot Project.
4. Teacher questionnaires were administered after the student skills and attitudinal testing had occurred. This testing might have affected teacher attitudes.

B. Highlights

1. Superintendents (11 Respondents)

- All superintendents' expectations had been met; all were satisfied with the overall implementation and would become involved in CORE French again.
- BEF-sponsored inservices were often mentioned as a positive influence on superintendents' attitudes.
- Six of the superintendents had concerns regarding "timetabling/scheduling" and "staffing."
- Superintendents viewed the CORE French Pilot Project as being superior to the existing Conversational French Program.
- The suggestion superintendents made most often, to improve the Program, was "greater support/contact needed with BEF."

2. Principals (36 Respondents)

- Over 90% of principals stated that their expectations had been met, that they were satisfied with the overall implementation and would become involved with CORE French again.
- Principals most often were satisfied with "opportunities for CORE teachers to become involved in curriculum development," "inservices," and "prescribed length (9 years) of the CORE French Program."

- Thirty-seven percent expressed dissatisfaction with the level of funding, mainly because of the large proportion of the funding which had to be used for substitutes.
- Approximately 70% had scheduling/timetabling concerns and 45% had staffing concerns.
- Approximately 70% of the principals viewed CORE French as an improvement over the existing Conversational French Program.

3. CORE French Teachers (31 Respondents)

- Most CORE French teachers felt they had been chosen because they were the "incumbent."
- Two-thirds were satisfied with all components of the implementation. Dissatisfaction was most often expressed with the "nature of initial information," "funding" and the "nature of evaluations."
- Timetabling/scheduling was most frequently mentioned by CORE French teachers as a source of concern.
- Approximately 30% of CORE teachers had "class size," "student selection" and "space allocation concerns."
- A majority of CORE French teachers felt CORE was better than the existing Conversational French Program.
- All CORE French teachers indicated that: their expectations had been met; they would participate again; and, they were satisfied with the CORE French Pilot Project.

4. Grade 4 Classroom Teachers (44 Respondents)

- Two-thirds of the classroom teachers had been informed of CORE French Program objectives.
- Over 90% of classroom teachers felt their students benefited from CORE French; approximately 80% felt their school benefited; and 34% felt they had personally benefited.
- The concern most often voiced by classroom teachers centred on the fact that CORE French took time away from other subjects.
- Over 95% of the classroom teachers felt it was "somewhat" or "very important" for students to learn French at the elementary level.

C. Conclusions

It was concluded that all participant groups were satisfied with the overall implementation of the CORE French Pilot Project. While the high

degree of satisfaction of the participants was evident, as might be expected in a Pilot year, a few concerns were reported. These concerns and their implications are as follows:

1. Timetabling/Scheduling

Superintendents, principals and classroom teachers expressed concerns with timetabling/scheduling. The reasons varied among participant groups and by geographic area. However, if a larger implementation of CORE French occurs, this is an area of contention that the Bureau might consider addressing. The major concern of classroom teachers, that "CORE takes time away from other subjects," also indicates that greater flexibility in this area might increase participant satisfaction.

2. Contact with BEF

While contact with the Bureau was often mentioned as a reason for participant satisfaction, superintendents most often suggested increased contact would improve the Program. It was observed, in discussion with administrators, that while satisfied with the nature of the information, they felt the dissemination process could be improved.

If CORE French is to be implemented on a larger scale, possibly informational meetings with each participant group, beginning at the superintendent level, could be held. This might result in greater consistency of expectations among participants, as well as increasing the likelihood of itinerant teachers receiving initial information.

3. Staffing

Administrators expressed concern with this area as it related to CORE French. Specifically, this concern dealt with future staffing needs based on the expansion of the CORE French Program. Given the fact that the quality of teaching influences the quality of any program, a balance should be struck between teaching ability and competency in the French language. If, in the future, competent CORE French teachers are in short supply, an option might be to retrain some classroom teachers as well as incumbent Conversational French teachers.

4. Concerns of Rural Participants

Analysis revealed differences in the concerns of rural and urban participants. If the CORE French Program is to be implemented throughout Manitoba, the problems and concerns of rural participants should be given careful consideration. For example, the distances and costs involved for rural CORE teachers to attend Winnipeg-based in-services created difficulties unique to their particular situation. Therefore, funding formulas and in-service locations used in future Program expansion might differ according to geographic location.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the CORE French Pilot Project was well planned and successfully implemented.