

K–12 Arts Education

**Summary of Consultations
with Francophone and
French Immersion Representatives**

2009 (DRAFT)

Government of Alberta ■
Education

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Arts Education – Kindergarten through Grade 12

Summary of Consultations with Francophone and French Immersion Representatives 2008

Introduction and Context

Alberta Education has implemented a plan for revising the fine arts program, and consultation is an integral part of the process of program development. Between January and December 2008, various stakeholders, including representatives from different francophone organizations and stakeholders supporting the French immersion program, offered their suggestions and ideas concerning Arts Education in Alberta. The results of these consultations will guide the development of a framework for Arts Education in Alberta.

Focus Groups

Opportunities for discussion were offered across Alberta from January 10 to December 5, 2008.

The following organizations were invited to participate in focus group discussions by nominating a representative:

- Association multiculturelle francophone de l'Alberta [Alberta multicultural francophone association]
- Autorité régionale francophone du Nord-Ouest No 1 [Northwest Francophone Education Region No. 1]
- Autorité régionale francophone du Centre-Nord No 2 [Greater North Central Francophone Education Region No. 2]
- Autorité régionale francophone du Centre-Est No 3 [East Central Francophone Education Region No. 3]
- Autorité régionale francophone catholique du Sud No 4 [Greater Southern Separate Catholic Francophone Education Region No. 4]
- Autorité régionale francophone publique du Sud No 4 [Greater Southern Public Francophone Education Region No. 4]
- Campus Saint-Jean, University of Alberta
- Centre de développement musical [Centre for musical development]
- Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta [Federation of francophone parents in Alberta]
- Regroupement artistique francophone de l'Alberta [Collective of francophone artists in Alberta]
- Francophone Secretariat

In total, seven representatives were nominated.

Consultation Dates:

January 10, 11, 15, 18, 23, and 24, 2008

November 17, and 18, 2008

December 5, 2008

Existing Advisory Committees:

The French Immersion Program Advisory Committee (FIPAC) gave its feedback and advice at the meetings it held in April and October 2008.

Questionnaire

Between November 24 and December 19, 2008, the following organizations were invited to answer a questionnaire concerning the role Arts Education plays in French-language education:

- Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA) [French-Canadian association of Alberta]
- ACFA Régionale de Bonnyville/Cold Lake [ACFA, Bonnyville/Cold Lake region]
- ACFA Régionale de Calgary [ACFA, Calgary region]
- ACFA Régionale de Canmore [ACFA, Canmore region]
- ACFA Régionale de Centralta [ACFA, Centralta region]
- ACFA Régionale de Grande Prairie [ACFA, Grande Prairie region]
- ACFA Régionale d'Edmonton [ACFA, Edmonton region]
- ACFA Régionale de Jasper [ACFA, Jasper region]
- ACFA Régionale de Lethbridge/Medicine Hat [ACFA, Lethbridge/Medicine Hat region]
- ACFA Régionale de Plamondon/Lac La Biche [ACFA, Plamondon/Lac La Biche region]
- ACFA Régionale de Red Deer [ACFA, Red Deer region]
- ACFA Régionale de Rivière-la-Paix [ACFA, Peace River region]
- ACFA Régionale de Rocky Mountain House [ACFA, Rocky Mountain House region]
- ACFA Régionale de Saint-Paul [ACFA, St. Paul region]
- ACFA Régionale de Wood Buffalo [ACFA, Wood Buffalo region]
- Alliance française of Edmonton
- Alliance française of Calgary
- Association culturelle rwandaise de l'Alberta [Rwandan cultural association of Alberta]
- Association de la communauté congolaise d'Edmonton [Congolese community association of Edmonton]
- Association jeunesse-famille de l'Alberta Society [Youth-family association of Alberta Society]
- Association la Girandole de l'Alberta [French Canadian dance and folklore association of Alberta]
- Association multiculturelle francophone de l'Alberta [Alberta multicultural francophone association]
- Campus Saint-Jean, University of Alberta

- Canadian Parents for French
- Centre d'arts visuels de l'Alberta [Alberta visual arts centre]
- Chorale Saint-Jean [St. Jean Choir]
- Fédération des aînés franco-albertains [Federation of franco-albertan seniors]
- Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta [Alberta federation of francophone parents]
- Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta [Francophone youth of Alberta]
- Institut Guy-Lacombe de la famille [Guy-Lacombe family institute]
- Société du centre d'arts visuels de l'Alberta [Alberta visual arts centre society]
- Société cInéMAGINE de l'Alberta [cInéMAGINE society of Alberta]
- Union des français à l'étranger – Alberta [Alberta association of French citizens abroad]
- UniThéâtre

In total, six organizations submitted answers to this questionnaire.

Francophone perspectives

Participants in the discussion groups and respondents to the questionnaire expressed ideas related to two major themes: the importance of the arts in francophone education and the importance of developing creativity in francophone students.

The arts in francophone communities

The arts help bring together individuals living in a minority situation. They foster the development of a sense of pride among francophones of all ages. Artistic activities can also increase the visibility of francophone communities within the greater community. According to one respondent, the arts are important “for developing a feeling of belonging to a distinct culture and for affirming ourselves as a people.” Another focus group participant said, “The arts are the cornerstone of the francophone cultural identity.”

1. The role of the arts in francophone education

The arts serve as a medium for transmitting language and culture. Nevertheless, many young French speakers do not have the opportunity to experience the arts in French at home. Francophone schools thus play an important role in exposing children to the arts and to culture. One respondent stated that it is important for the arts to be part of francophone education “in order to create a francophone cultural identity and develop a sense of belonging within the community.”

Artistic activities can encourage students to develop their creativity. One parent said, “As a francophone community, we want to encourage our students to develop their creativity and to express who they are because they are the ones building the future.”

2. The goals of art education

Participants in the discussion groups and respondents to the questionnaire identified several goals for arts education:

- To acquire vocabulary related to the arts in the students’ mother tongue;
- To learn about great artists;
- To become familiar and experiment with different art forms (e.g., singing, acting, improvising, dancing, painting, drawing and handicrafts);
- To value and share their own talents;
- To value their own efforts and develop a sense of accomplishment;
- To grow and express themselves as individuals;
- To understand the relationship that exists between the arts and cultural identity;
- To develop a sense of belonging and identity;
- To bring a francophone colour or flavour to their work;
- To learn to cooperate and to deal with competition;
- To develop creativity, imagination and motivation through arts;
- To enjoy themselves.

3. Examples of activities that promote artistic development

Discussion participants and respondents to the questionnaire cited these examples of activities that promote the artistic development of francophone students:

- Family activities in which parents are involved;
- Activities that are accessible to all students and offered during classroom hours;
- Listening to and viewing works by francophone artists from here and abroad;
- Workshops on different artistic disciplines (e.g., Girandole dance workshops, regional theatre workshops offered by UniThéâtre, classes given by the Centre de développement musical);
- Attending artistic events (e.g., Jazz-Art, the youth theatre festival, the Chicane albertaine, community gatherings);
- Integrating the arts into the teaching of core subjects in order to enrich the educational experience.

Creativity

Student participation in artistic activities can promote the development of creativity.

1. The importance of creative expression

According to respondents to the questionnaire and discussion participants, artistic education should help students develop their creativity. One respondent said, “Given that we hope our children will become responsible adults who show proof of their leadership, developing their creative expression and encouraging them from a young age will help them develop into global citizens.”

Creative expression is also a form of growth that helps individuals express their values, life experiences, identity and original ideas. One respondent commented that “creativity is fundamental to development and discovery.”

2. Conditions necessary for the development of creativity

Respondents to the questionnaire suggested that creativity develops when:

- Students feel that they are respected, involved and given responsibilities;
- Projects proposed to students allow them to contribute their own ideas;
- Students are asked to express themselves in different ways;
- Students resolve problems by using a variety of processes and tools.

French Immersion Perspectives

The role of the arts in French language education

Arts education contributes to the intellectual and personal development of students in French immersion programs. Arts courses give them time for discovery, creation and personal enjoyment.

Artistic exploration can help immersion students get to know and accept themselves. An immersion teacher explained that “when you express yourself through art, you have a chance to discover yourself and the world around you.” By participating in artistic activities, students discover their strengths and personal preferences. One respondent suggested that we should also allow students to express their emotions and personal thoughts and that sometimes these could be shared with an audience.

Arts courses help immersion students become more familiar with the cultures of different francophone groups. In certain schools, students learn traditional French-Canadian songs and participate in cultural activities that represent different French-Canadian traditions. It is important that students learn a variety of art forms, both traditional and modern, so that they get a more complete portrait of francophone cultures. It is also important for students to become familiar with francophone artists who come from different francophone communities and cultures so that they will better appreciate the diversity that exists in the French-speaking world.

Arts courses offer real-life situations for learning French. Visual arts, dramatic arts and music courses as well as physical activity allow students to enjoy themselves and to call on a variety of skills. It is important for students to receive instruction in French during complementary classes. This will help them develop a richer vocabulary, acquire vernacular language and engage in a wider variety of experiences in French. Theatre and improvisation are two examples of artistic activities that could support the improvement of oral French. One respondent noted that “you can’t learn a language by memorizing it, only by living it.”

Creativity

Immersion students must be encouraged to use their imagination and to bring their own projects to fruition. One respondent said, “When students create something with their own hands, they tend to remember the vocabulary or the new concepts they’ve learned.” We can encourage the development of immersion students’ creativity by offering them many opportunities to experiment, in French, with a variety of artistic forms. We can also allow students to choose how they would like to express themselves: through song, drama, drawing or writing.