



Media Release

Core French enrolment begins an upswing in Sask.

Saskatoon, June 11 – In the June 6, 2013 issue of the Saskatoon Star Phoenix, an article entitled *Fewer Saskatchewan students studying a second language* citing the core French program as a reason for the decline of enrolment in second language classes in the province.

The sheer number of students who enrolled in second language programs - namely core French - began to drop in the late 1990s. However, this fluctuation can be correlated to the dip in Saskatchewan's overall population. Since the amalgamation of Saskatchewan school divisions in 2006 (from 86 to 29), there were some changes to the overall enrolment numbers as well. School boards had to evaluate many programs, and core French would have taken a hit when the provincial population decreased.

For the past few years, these numbers have started to increase. In 2009-2010 there were 48,815 students enrolled in core French, and in 2011-2012, the number grew to 52,111, which indicates a steady increase of 6.75 per cent. This is likely due to two main factors – the growth in Saskatchewan's overall population since then, and the implementation of a renewed core French curriculum in the province. In 2009, The Ministry of Education, along with teaching professionals from various school divisions, began a comprehensive revitalization process for all core French curricula. The development of this endeavour started at the kindergarten level, and is currently completed up to grade nine.

"The emphasis of core French is now placed on literacy and oral communication, so it encourages more conversational learning," said Acting President of Canadian Parents for French – Saskatchewan (CPF-SK) Eric Bolay. "Before, the curriculum focused mostly on verb structure. Teachers are also receiving more in-service training and are teaching in modules that build a stronger foundation in learning French."

In larger urban centres, many students have opted for French immersion. In the last ten years, enrolment in immersion has increased 30 per cent, with the last eight years seeing consecutive increases. However, the need for qualified second language teachers and second language learning in rural areas of the province is essential. "Where immersion is not an option, parents, teachers and community groups are encouraged to advocate for more resources and activities in French," added Bolay. "Also, interest in French immersion keeps rising with new programs opening every year."

Bolay continued, "The next logical step in encouraging enrolment in second language courses would be to mandate the addition of languages as a mandatory learning component across the province. According to the Star Phoenix article, the Ministry of Education finds great value in learning additional languages. Coupled with a rejuvenated program, a mandatory language component could definitely see core French enrolment numbers continue to rise."

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) is the national network of volunteers who value French as an integral part of Canada and are dedicated to the promotion, creation and support of effective French-Second-Language (FSL) learning opportunities for youth in Canada.

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