

Knowing One's Community

THROUGH ARTS EDUCATION



Canadian Teachers' Federation
Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants



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KNOWING ONE'S COMMUNITY THROUGH ARTS EDUCATION

The Services to Francophones sector of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) strives to provide teachers with the tools they need to perform an important dimension of their mission, which is to transmit and build the Francophone identity. The *Knowing One's Community* series explores how school curricula contribute to this objective. A few years ago, CTF undertook this exploration by conducting two research projects which led to the publication of a document on French curricula and another on social studies curricula. A third document, entitled *General Overview*, provided an outline of these publications.

After several attempts to find ways to finance a third research report, we naturally thought of collaborating with the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française (FCCF) to examine arts curricula from the same angle as the two previous studies, which was to determine the extent that curricula provides teachers with the tools they need to act as cultural transmitters.

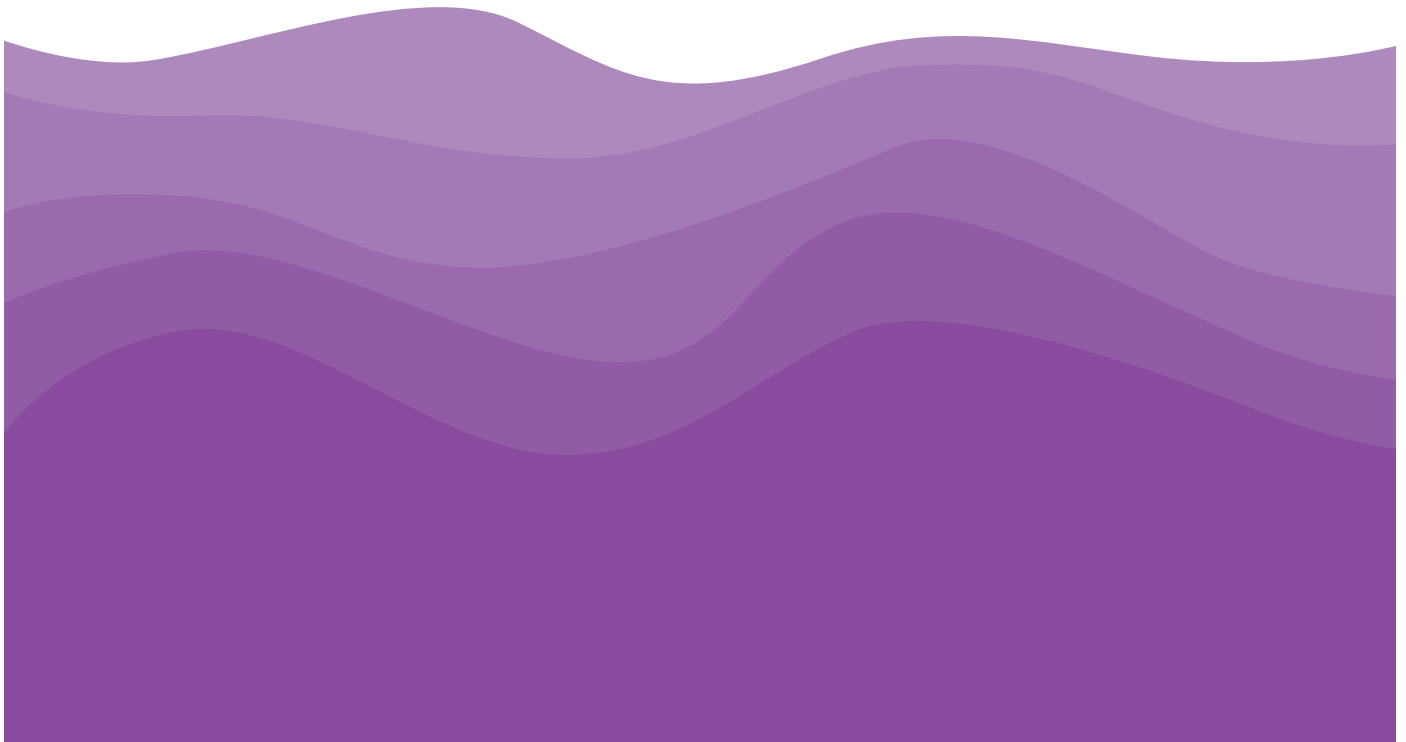
It is important to remember that curricula are the very basis for all teaching in schools recognized by provincial and territorial jurisdictions. They are the reference from which teachers draw inspiration and guidance in choosing activities for their students. Considering how much importance is given to the transmission and building of culture and identity in French-language schools, this research project comes at a time when vital decisions must be made to promote a sense of belonging and a lasting commitment to the Francophonie among youth.

Like the other documents in the series, *Knowing One's Community Through Arts Education* presents the general findings of a Canada-wide analysis of curricula in use in French-language schools in minority settings. It also contains recommendations designed to assist curriculum developers to better meet the needs of teachers. Many teachers also closely contribute to the development of these essential documents. We hope that this third research report will bring inspiration and new courses of action that will contribute to our common goal: giving students in French-language schools the best possible education.

Ronald Boudreau
Director, Services to Francophones

KNOWING ONE'S COMMUNITY THROUGH

ARTS EDUCATION





BACKGROUND

In 2004, the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française (FCCF) published a report called *Recherche-action sur le lien langue-culture-éducation en milieu minoritaire francophone* (action research on the link between language, culture and education in Francophone minority settings). The report listed a great number of studies exploring this fundamental linkage and promising initiatives that met the necessary conditions to connect arts education and cultural construction. In conclusion, it also suggested a series of avenues for education professionals to explore in order to further thinking on this topic. The backdrop to the report was the special role and status of French-language schools in minority settings:

[Translation] (...) we recognize that French-language schools cannot have the same mandate as English-language schools (which serve the linguistic majority) and that the former must explicitly offer students a “cultural project” that has the potential to mobilize them. *Recherche-action sur le lien langue-culture-éducation en milieu minoritaire francophone*, p. 57

The Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF) has also been addressing cultural issues for a long time. In 2009, it published a report called *L’appropriation culturelle des jeunes à l’école secondaire francophone en milieu minoritaire* (cultural ownership by young people in French-language secondary schools in minority settings) with a whole section on youth cultural experience. Among the findings of this study, serious concerns were raised about the links between the school and the local cultural environment. The report pointed out, among other things, that the

concentration of French speakers in any given region does not in itself guarantee contacts with French-language cultural products. Furthermore, students felt that they had very few opportunities at school to actively participate in the production of artistic projects in French and to be in contact with visual artists from the local community.

From these findings came the idea of looking at strategies used in arts education. And when it comes to educational strategies, curricula are usually the first source of inspiration for teachers.

The FCCF was naturally interested in CTF’s work on the issue of cultural ownership by youth and together they decided to further explore arts curricula. This research project is the result of their shared interest.

In 2008, CTF launched the *Knowing One’s Community* series examining curricula in provinces and territories where French is the language of the minority. *Knowing One’s Community Through Arts Education* is part of this series.

The research project that led to this report was conducted during the 2013-14 winter months and it is important to keep in mind that only curricula available at that time on the various ministries of Education’s Websites were analyzed. Documents that were not available electronically were not included in the research.

Finally, to ensure consistency with the *Knowing One’s Community* series, this research project was structured around the same themes as the previous ones.

GENERAL INFORMATION

French-language schools in minority settings differ from other schools with their dual mission: the educational success of students and the building of their Francophone identity. As a result, there are few French-language school boards or schools that do not underline the importance of the French-language culture in their mission.

Generally speaking, arts are associated with the expression of a culture. At the society level, this link is considered obvious. However, this association is not as clear in education, especially in French-language education.

It is fairly safe to say that arts education may even be *more* relevant in education in minority settings than in any other context. Considering the fact that only recently did French-language schools fall under the governance of the Francophone community, the question of the importance of arts education bears asking. If majority schools consider arts education as important, shouldn't minority schools view it as a priority, since it is so closely linked to the building of cultural identity?


WHAT IS A CURRICULUM?

It is important to mention that, in Canada, there are a variety of names used to designate the documents that serve as a first source of reference by teachers for a specific subject area. In this report, we will use the term *curricula* to designate the pedagogical documents that have been approved by ministries of Education and that set the teaching goals in each subject area on the education agenda. Curricula are generally divided in two components: the *theoretical framework*, which presents the provincial or territorial education system's expectations for the subject area, and the *teaching plan*, which presents learning outcomes in greater detail.

*What images of the Francophone community do French-language schools project? What memories and what heritage are valued? Where do globalization and diversity fit in? What are the cultural reference points? In short, to what extent do curricula, which are the foundation for teaching in these schools, contribute to the achievement of the "community-knowing" mission of minority schools at the elementary and secondary levels?**

[Knowing One's Community - Final Report p. 2]

* The complete version of this report is available on CTF's website at www.ctf-fce.ca/en/Pages/Francophones/Research.aspx.



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CURRICULUM STRUCTURE FOR ARTS EDUCATION

In curricula, arts education includes four disciplines: visual arts, drama, music and dance. Three provinces provide guidance for teaching these four disciplines, but the majority offer no document to support some of the courses, even if they are part of the teaching program. The most common discipline is visual arts¹, which is taught in all provinces and territories. It should be noted however that not all levels have arts curricula to support these courses.²

Of all arts disciplines, the visual arts discipline is the one that is most often compulsory. Arts education is an integral part of the teaching program mostly at the elementary level. At the secondary level, the four arts disciplines are most often optional, although some provinces require students to choose at least one course in a list of options.

When curricula do exist, most administrations/ jurisdictions have developed specific documents for each of the four arts disciplines. Two provinces, Ontario and Saskatchewan (at some levels), have adopted an approach that defines a theoretical framework establishing common grounds for arts education and then prescribes teaching plans for every one of the four disciplines.

As far as format is concerned, documents listing learning outcomes vary from several hundred pages in some jurisdictions to one page only in others.

It is important to note that some curricula specify in their introduction that they are translated or adapted from English. In other cases, it is their lack of references to the Francophonie that suggests that they are translated or adapted from English. Curricula that are developed in French are more easily recognizable and their content makes clear references to the Francophonie. Some curricula are developed in French and English simultaneously, so that references come from both linguistic communities, with no emphasis on French references. In such case, it becomes the responsibility of the teachers to decide what cultural references are the most relevant for their students. Also, some jurisdictions develop the same curricula for French-language and French-immersion schools.

¹ Also called fine arts.

² Our research did not explore whether or not these curriculum guides are available in English.

REFERENCES TO THE COMMUNITY

Not surprisingly, arts curricula put a lot of emphasis on the expression of cultural diversity. Arts, by their very nature, foster a willingness to embrace other cultures' artistic production and it should not be otherwise.

Generally speaking, exploring other world cultures through arts is an appropriate strategy in this context. It is however of concern that although curricula may suggest a list of cultures or even artists to discover, the Francophonie is rarely mentioned. Should the Francophonie appear on these "lists" or should it be the object of a specific exploration?

It is important to note that initiatives designed to adapt curricula to provide Francophone content are commendable. However, it is surprising to see that most adapted curricula rarely refer to local artists, and refer instead to the French (from France) or Quebec artistic communities.

In Atlantic Canada, the ministries of Education of the four provinces supported an initiative under the umbrella of the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF).³ As a result, all curricula for French-language schools have the same theoretical framework taking into account the contributions of the Acadian and other French-speaking communities. A statement to this effect appears in all curricular documents based on this framework. In most cases, the resulting theoretical framework does not translate into learning outcomes in the teaching plan. Yet the link between the theoretical framework and the teaching plan is necessary if one wants teachers to really pass on the suggested values to the students.

NAMING A COMMUNITY

The concept of community is well stated in most arts curricula. As with other subject area curricula, the geographic and sociological definitions of a community continue to raise the same ambivalence. While most curricula have no hesitation referring to English-speaking artists – which is perfectly legitimate – no similar efforts seem to be made to promote the cultural and artistic life of other French-speaking minority communities. The examples provided are mostly taken from the geographic local community. Yet, for the sake of students who attend a French-language school in a minority setting, shouldn't community solidarity and strength contribute to foster their sense of belonging to the Francophonie as a whole?

[...] the link between the theoretical framework and the teaching plan is necessary if one wants teachers to really pass on the suggested values to the students.

3 The APEF was renamed the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) in 2004.



THE PLACE OF CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Before addressing the question of the integration of cultural and identity components in arts curricula, one needs to recognize that the very foundations of arts education go well beyond linguistic issues. It is therefore understandable that most of the said foundations are the same for all curricula, French or English. However, it is equally fair to expect that French curricula should include some thinking on French-language specificity to better serve the needs of French-speaking students, when it is appropriate to do so.

For example, a statement such as [translation] “drama can be a good way to help students develop self-knowledge and to make them more interested in their mother tongue”⁴ may seem suitable for both linguistic communities. However, in a statement to the effect that [translation] “in a French setting under constant threat of assimilation, it is important to give students the tools that will help them overcome the fear to express themselves”⁵, there is an element that not only is setting-specific, but reinforces the importance of drama in a given context.

Manitoba deserves special praise for its efforts in initiating a discussion on the theoretical framework that supports arts education. In this province, each arts education curriculum guide starts with an introduction prepared by two education researchers who address the role of French-language schools, the role of the French-language in those schools, and the links between arts education and culture and identity building. This introduction ends with a series of learning principles to be applied to the teaching of arts in French-language schools in minority settings.⁶

This theoretical framework may inspire curriculum developers for a specific subject area. For example, the following learning outcome, taken from one of the

province’s curriculum guides, refers specifically to the type of tools allowing teachers to link their teaching and the school’s mandate:

[Translation] Students who have achieved expectations for this grade are able to demonstrate understanding of the intended meaning of Francophone artworks in particular and of the ways in which art reflects the Francophone identity of the artist.⁷

It would be useful to have more of these types of learning outcomes in all curricula, because they show how to concretely guide teachers through activities that are both meaningful for students and respectful of the French-language school’s mandate. Such expectations in a curriculum must however come with proper strategies to allow teachers to guide their students towards the targeted result. All artists do not translate their cultural identity in their work and it is often the viewer’s personal experience that will influence his or her understanding of the artistic work.

Translated or adapted curricula are often reflecting “missed opportunities”. For example, in music, students may be asked to write lyrics for an existing tune, but instead of suggesting a known French tune, the teaching plan suggests an English tune, inviting students to put French words to it. In a drama course, the main text is translated, but all character names remain English.

Previous research done for the *Knowing One’s Community* series showed that culture is often presented as closely linked to language. While it could be expected that arts curricula be more precise in this respect, they include the same reminders of the importance of oral expression development activities to enrich students’ vocabulary.

4 *Initiation à l’art dramatique 93411*. Department of Education of New Brunswick, Instructional Services Branch (draft, July 2006), p. 21.

5 Ibid.

6 The list of principles is available in the appendix with the authorization of the Manitoba Bureau de l’éducation française.

7 *Arts visuels — Maternelle à 8^e année, Cadre manitobain des résultats d’apprentissage*, Manitoba Education, Bureau de l’éducation française, 2011, p. 39.



A FRANCOPHONE MINORITY PRESENCE

Previous research for the *Knowing One's Community* series also showed that the Francophone minority was hardly reflected in curricula. Arts curricula are no exception.

There are very few references to francophone organizations promoting arts or other areas, in curricula. The only exceptions might be New Brunswick's music curricula that mention, for example, the *Trousse du passeur culturel* (the conveyors of culture kit), a tool developed for school principals in order to help teachers fulfil the school's cultural mandate. While curricula sometimes mention the names of artists, they rarely talk about their artistic or other contribution. They often give the impression that it is up to teachers to present the artistic community to students.

In 2009, Alberta published the results of a consultation held in an effort to revise arts curricula in order "to represent current research, promising practice, cultural diversity and technological infusion."⁸ In a related document reflecting the Franco-Albertan community's opinions, it is clear that the participants gave arts education a central place in French-language schools in minority settings:

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.⁹

[curricula] often give the impression that it is up to teachers to present the artistic community to students.

⁸ *K–12 Arts Education Curriculum Consultation Report*. Government of Alberta, Department of Education (Draft, 2009), p. 1.

⁹ *K–12 Arts Education, Summary of Consultations with Francophone and French Immersion Representatives*. Government of Alberta, Department of Education (Draft, 2009), p. 1.



CONCLUSION

In curricula in general, arts education seems to be the poor cousin of all subject areas. First, major gaps still need to be filled in current curricula for the range of prescribed courses. Second, existing curricula give little support to teachers who want to integrate a current and dynamic cultural dimension that is reflective of the Canadian Francophone minority settings.

It is however important to recognize and appreciate the efforts made by some provinces mentioned in the analysis. These efforts represent the emergence of an awareness of the important role played by arts education in cultural appropriation in a school setting. Far from wanting to give to arts education

the full responsibility of the schools' cultural mandate, one cannot deny the particularly close link between arts education and local cultural life in Francophone communities in minority settings.

With education being a provincial or territorial responsibility in Canada, it can be hoped that current efforts to better support arts education will be extended to all educational settings. Through consultation and exploration, a theoretical framework specifically intended for minority settings could be developed and used as a basis for the development of teaching plans designed to truly support teachers in fostering student learning.

[...] existing curricula give little support to teachers who want to integrate a current and dynamic cultural dimension that is reflective of the Canadian Francophone minority settings.



RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

When the first two documents of the *Knowing One's Community* series were published, a national consultation was held and a series of general recommendations were made about curriculum development for French-language schools in minority settings. According to CTF's and FCCF's validation committees, these recommendations remain valid and have been adapted for the purpose of this report:

In order to provide a framework that is conducive to the transmission and building of identity in French-language schools, the provincial and territorial jurisdictions need **to establish a process** that will directly involve teachers in these schools and key community stakeholders in curriculum development. Teachers are in the best position to identify the needs being experienced in the classroom and the realities of students in minority settings.

Research about the integration of culture and identity building in teaching through curricula needs to be carried out at the national level because it is a challenge that is shared by all of our minority Francophone communities. The *Cadre d'orientation en construction identitaire* (identity building orientation framework) published by the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française (ACELF), which involved an experienced team of researchers, has laid the foundations for the dialogue that needs to evolve.


Teacher training needs to factor in how identity building can be incorporated into the objectives targeted by each of the curricula. This concern should be a priority in the process of curriculum development, and the Pédagogie à l'école de langue française (PELF) (pedagogy in French-language schools) needs to be prioritized to promote integration strategies. It is important to keep the teaching load realistic while at the same time making more room for identity building.

Regional collaboration initiatives, like the ones that led to the adoption of common frameworks, or national initiatives need to be encouraged. Numerous portals offer teaching resources by subject area and grade, making it easier to target the resources that would be the most useful in promoting identity building. It would be helpful to determine which of these portals is the most commonly used by arts teachers and to invest in it in a pan-Canadian spirit of cooperation.

Curricula need to be supported by an **educational resources development strategy** designed to address not only how to transmit and build student identities, but also how to provide support for teachers in the classroom.

The jurisdictions responsible for curriculum development need **to define an image of the Francophone community that needs to be conveyed** to the students, along with ways of presenting it in the various curriculum subject areas at every grade level. The current lack of connection with the different Canadian Francophonies is an example of a gap that needs to be avoided.

The analysis of curricula found that the **theoretical framework is rarely echoed in the learning outcomes** meant to guide teachers in the various subject areas. Provincial and territorial jurisdictions need to ensure that curriculum developers properly articulate intentions in terms of concrete learning outcomes and ways of achieving them.



In view of the already heavy workload of teachers in minority settings, the provincial and territorial jurisdictions must make a significant effort to incorporate courses of thought, examples and activities into the curricula, as well as references to works that can **support content delivery**.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO ARTS EDUCATION

CTF's and FCCF's validation committees have combined their efforts to target actions in regards specifically to arts curriculum development:

- Arts curricula must help students in French-language schools to understand the **role of provincial and national organizations** of the Francophonie that support arts and culture.
- All curriculum developers in Canada should consider developing a **generic theoretical framework** for arts education that would specifically serve the needs of French-language schools and would be based on the work of our university researchers.
- Paths and strategies suggested in arts curricula must promote the development of **partnerships** with the artistic community that contributes to the Francophonie
- The **place of technology**, whether as a means of distribution or production, must be better reflected in arts curricula's learning outcomes.
- Arts curricula should encourage an **integrated approach** to culture and identity in all their components: creation, appreciation, interpretation, and production.
- Paths and activities suggested in curricula should help teachers and other educators **to improve their understanding** of the best integration strategies for identity building and of their role as cultural transmitters.
- Arts curricula would benefit from strategies on how to assist students **to appreciate the Francophone minority's works of art** in the classroom, including the work of local artists and others from the greater Francophone minority community.
- Arts curricula must present a **modern, pluralistic and open-to-the-world Francophone culture**.
- In arts education, the preferred approach should be based on the concept of conscientisation developed in the Pédagogie à l'école de langue française (PELF) in order to go beyond entertainment to **encourage an engaged citizenship**.
- Arts curricula should **place students in a context of creation**, thereby allowing them through artistic endeavours to express their identity and to play a role in the development of the Francophone culture.
- The proposed approach in arts curricula must focus on maintaining solid ties with the artistic community in order to promote the **expansion of the educational mission** of the school to parents and the community.

APPENDIX

[TRANSLATION]

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ARTS EDUCATION IN FRENCH-LANGUAGE SCHOOLS IN MINORITY SETTINGS

In French-language schools, arts education in French will be more successful and will further contribute to students' identity building when:

1. language is considered as a means to communicate, think, learn, express oneself and build one's cultural identity;
2. students have frequent opportunities to express themselves, so as to "think and live the arts", especially through interactions with other students and other people;
3. students are exposed to great artistic, linguistic and cultural models with whom they can identify and who come from diverse backgrounds, including regional, national and international Francophonie;
4. students take ownership of the language as it applies to arts and the creative process, and more broadly handle language comfortably in artistic contexts;
5. students are exposed to a variety of stimulating artistic activities, reflect on – and give meaning to – their artistic learning, and celebrate their success, thus reinforcing their identity building and their positive relationship with the language;
6. artistic learning happens in a climate of trust and respect that encourages students to make choices, to take risks, to assert themselves, and to take initiatives;
7. learning situations are meaningful and relevant, and lead to exploration, investigation, use of various materials, creation and problem solving;
8. learning situations take into account the zone of proximal development (student needs and abilities, suggested challenges, learning methods used to help students progress), previous knowledge and students' interests;
9. learning situations call upon the heart, the mind, the senses and the body, and respect the different ways of learning;
10. the home and the community reinforce artistic learning and students contribute in return to the Francophone community;
11. assessment methods complete one another and are integrated to learning – they contribute to the learning process and they foster reflection on learning.