

Reflection: A Tool for Teachers and Students



Introduction

One of the seven enduring ideas in [The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core French, Grades 4-8; Extended French, Grades 4-8; French Immersion, Grades 1-8, \(revised\) 2013](#) and [The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core French, Extended French and French Immersion, Grades 9-12, \(revised\) 2014](#), hereafter referred to as the Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, is the importance of goal setting and reflection. When students are involved in reflection about their learning and work towards goals “they will be able to determine what strategies contributed to their success and how they can apply, adapt and/or modify these strategies as they pursue their goals for future learning,” [The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula for elementary](#) and [secondary](#) (p. 11). Students will become better able to see connections between lessons, their learning and their lives and will eventually be able to self-regulate their learning, resulting in autonomy and independence. Better reflection and goal setting lead to success, which in turn increases motivation and engagement in the learning process. By providing clear and relevant success criteria and ensuring comprehension of learning goals, we can support their students’ ability to understand how to succeed and to reflect on their learning.

The Role of Metacognition

“Metacognitive strategies involve planning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, and monitoring and evaluating one’s progress,” [The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula for elementary](#) and [secondary](#) (p. 9). The Revised Curriculum integrates metacognition in all four strands (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) at all grade levels, for all FSL programs. One

of the seven fundamental principles of [Growing Success, Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools, 2010](#), hereafter referred to as Growing Success, is that teachers help “develop students’ self-assessment skills to enable them to assess their own learning, set specific goals, and plan next steps for their learning.” (p. 6) In this way, students develop autonomy and take responsibility for not only their learning, but for their understanding of how they learn.

Metacognitive practices are invaluable for teachers as well: reflection, goal setting and teaching appropriate learning strategies to students result in a more engaging program centred around students’ strengths, needs and interests. When teachers model explicitly how they learn, and the value of learning through mistakes made, it encourages students to take risks and responsibility for their learning. “Students who develop these skills become more efficient and effective learners.” [A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers, Module 6, Learner Autonomy and Metacognition](#) (p. 2)

With a repertoire of learning strategies, the habit of setting and working towards goals and an understanding how they best learn a second language, students will be far more confident and involved in the second language learning experience. As we learn in [Connecting Practice and Research: Metacognition Guide, Literacy Gains \(2008\)](#), “Metacognition can increase engagement ... has the potential to empower students take to charge of their own learning and to increase the meaningfulness of students’ learning.” (p. 2)

To promote metacognitive strategies, we may:

- explicitly model language learning strategies (such as think alouds, modelled, shared and guided oral communication, reading and writing);
- provide surveys and activities to introduce and determine what strategies students find useful to their learning, understanding how they learn and their autonomy as learners;
- draw from student work as a way of eliciting understanding of language learning strategies;
- co-create anchor charts of learning strategies;
- model and practise: → goal setting → problem solving → reflection;
- use prompts/questions with students to encourage reflection and goal-setting, such as: **'Qu'est-ce que je dois faire? Qu'est-ce que je veux accomplir? Quelles sont les options ou les approches différentes?'**

Adapted from [Connecting Practice and Research: Metacognition Guide, Literacy Gains, 2008.](#)

- co-create self-assessment and goal-setting exercises and help students monitor their learning;
- use assessment for and assessment as learning strategies to help students monitor their progress, to promote self-correction and to set goals based on self-assessment;
- provide timely, effective feedback to students on their work and the strategies they are using;
- work with students to determine appropriate next steps for their work;
- consider some of the following questions when determining teacher self-evaluation: 'Do the majority of my learning goals relate to the curriculum expectations? Do my methods of evaluation reflect current practices, and include evaluation for, of and as learning?'

More ideas about metacognitive strategies can be found in [The Revised FSL Curriculum, 2013](#) in each strand. For example, in listening expectation A2.3, students are asked to "describe strategies they found helpful before, during and after listening and to identify their areas of greater and lesser strength as

listeners, and plan steps they can take to improve their listening skills." (p. 55)

Reflective Practice

- ✓ How do I teach metacognitive skills in my Core French classroom?
- ✓ What strategies and tools do I use to promote learner autonomy?
- ✓ How do my students keep track of their learning?
- ✓ How do my students make their thinking visible?
- ✓ How do I support beginning language learners so they can use French to discuss their learning?
- ✓ How do I assess metacognition?
- ✓ How do I ensure that learning goals are clear?
- ✓ How do I involve the students in setting learning goals and co-constructing success criteria?
- ✓ What strategies do I use to teach students to provide effective and constructive peer feedback?
- ✓ What would I remove, repeat, or rethink in my teaching of metacognition and learner autonomy?
- ✓ How does explicit teaching of learner autonomy and metacognitive skills benefit my students?

[A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers, Module 6, Learner Autonomy and Metacognition](#) (p. 11)



Productive classroom practices such as reciprocal teaching, self-questioning, story and concept mapping, journaling, and buddy reading offer opportunities to teach both with and for metacognition. (Barton, V., et al. 2001)

Teaching with Metacognition	Teaching for Metacognition
Reflect on instructional goals	Embed metacognitive activities through varied instructional approaches
Reflect on teaching approaches	Provide time for students to brainstorm options and identify learning goals
Model metacognitive thinking through think-alouds before, during, and after instructional tasks	Ask students which tasks are easy, which are hard, and why
Encourage the use of a variety of intelligences to complete tasks	Encourage the use of alternative approaches
	Have students confirm their understandings orally and in writing

Connecting Practice and Research: Metacognition Guide, Literacy Gains (2008)



Ways in which we can promote learner autonomy include:

- encouraging students to focus on and recognize what they can do in order to lead to next steps;
- having students keep portfolios to track and monitor learning and goals;
- setting clear, understandable learning goals connected to the expectations in the FSL curriculum - and check for comprehension of these goals;
- co-create success criteria with students that are grounded in the curriculum and that have the goal of increasing functional proficiency in French;
- base learning on authentic tasks that are grounded in everyday life context, where students are required to use purposeful communication. Such tasks increase engagement, motivation and encourage higher order thinking and use of a variety of learning strategies;
- co-create anchor charts with students, model and provide ongoing opportunities for practising vocabulary that will lead to students being able to express their thinking in French (see teacher prompts in metacognition expectations in [The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula for elementary](#) and [secondary](#);
- plan responsive lessons incorporating student feedback from entry/exit cards;
- have students provide personal goals for fluency and proficiency in French;
- use timely goals and monitor progress throughout the year. See sample template below:

Learner Autonomy

When we emphasize what students can do, we help them self-assess their abilities and progress in second language learning. The focus is placed on proficiency rather than perfection. This positive approach helps reduce stress levels, engages the students in their learning and increases responsibility for their learning. Learners become more independent and develop the ability to recognise where they are in the language learning process and how to progress in their second language acquisition and skills.

As we learn in [Connecting Practice and Research: Metacognition Guide, Literacy Gains \(2008\)](#), “Instruction in metacognitive skills promotes the self-monitoring and self-regulation that can lead to intellectual growth, increase academic achievement, and support transfer of skills so that students are able to use any strategy at any time and for any purpose.” [The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula for elementary](#) and [secondary](#) state that “Students need to take responsibility for their learning by being aware of their abilities and monitoring their own progress.” (p. 11)

but	septembre	octobre	nouembre	décembre
T = toujours S = souvent Q = quelquefois R = rarement				
Je prends des risques.	T S Q R	T S Q R	T S Q R	T S Q R
Je parle avec mes amis en français.	T S Q R	T S Q R	T S Q R	T S Q R
J'utilise la rétroaction de M./Mme quand j'écris.	T S Q R	T S Q R	T S Q R	T S Q R
Je pose des questions de suite dans mes conversations.	T S Q R	T S Q R	T S Q R	T S Q R

Links to Growing Success

Learning Strategies and Skills

As stated earlier, modelling and explicitly teaching learning strategies and skills and providing multiple ongoing opportunities for the students to practice these will encourage learners to understand what they can do to support and monitor their own learning. Please refer to *Growing Success* (p. 11) for a comprehensive list of Learning Skills and Work Habits that will help the students become responsible and independent learners.

As teachers of FSL, we may:

- Have students learn and use reflective questions such as:
 - *Est-ce que je préfère travailler seul(e), avec un partenaire ou en groupe?*
 - *Est-ce que je prends des risques? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas?*
 - *Est-ce que je pose des questions pour m'aider à comprendre?*
 - *Est-ce que je sais ce que je peux faire quand j'ai des difficultés?*

Adapted from *A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers, Module 6, Learner Autonomy and Metacognition.*

- co-create anchor charts/reference resources describing qualities/characteristics of (for example): a confident learner, someone who takes risks, someone who perseveres, a good listener, speaker, reader, writer, a collaborative/cooperative learner or a competent problem-solver;
- co-reflect (teacher and students) on first-time, ongoing and overall use of learning strategies.



Assessment as, for and of Learning

We learn from [Growing Success](#), that “Assessment plays a critical role in teaching and learning and should have as its goal the development of students as independent and autonomous learners. As an integral part of teaching and learning, assessment should be planned concurrently with instruction and integrated seamlessly into the learning cycle to inform instruction, guide next steps, and help teachers and students monitor students’ progress towards achieving learning goals.” (p. 29) It is important for teachers to not only help students develop goal setting and reflection skills, but to explicitly teach, model and practise goal setting and reflection with regard to their learning and teaching practice.

We should then:

- share learning goals and co-create success criteria with students at beginning of learning in order to ensure student understanding of goals and criteria as they participate in the language learning;
- assess student needs/strengths before, during and at the end of a task, learning cycle, period of instruction;
- use a variety of assessment strategies, and ensure triangulation of evidence in order to encompass all student learning (include product, observation and conversation);
- use assessment to inform instruction, determine next steps and to help students understand and monitor their progress;
- use the achievement chart found in [The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary](#) (pgs. 25-29) and [secondary](#) (pgs. 29-33) as a foundation for developing criteria for student feedback and as a framework for assessing student achievement of the curriculum expectations;
- provide students with timely, effective, descriptive and understandable feedback and check to ensure that students understand how to use the feedback to further succeed;
- provide scaffolded instruction in order to help students learn to develop skills of understanding criteria, how to apply criteria and how to use teacher feedback effectively.

Teacher, Self and Peer Assessment

• In the modelling and use of a variety of assessment tools and strategies, teachers can also provide opportunities for students to become comfortable with peer and self-assessment. Students who are involved in assessing their own learning, who help peers determine their strengths and next steps and who also participate in feedback to the teacher become more capable, confident learners and can use these skills to improve their language learning as well as adapt these skills for use beyond the classroom. Both teachers and students need to understand the value and use of the data collected in through peer and self-assessment, which can be used to inform planning, to understand the needs of students, to monitor student progress towards goals, and to promote engagement of students in the process of their learning.

As teachers of FSL, we may:

- encourage students to reflect and set goals before, during and at the end of a learning cycle in a variety of ways including use of survey-type graphic organizer templates, exit/entry cards, through short audio/video recordings, in partner discussion or with another tracking/monitoring tool;
- explicitly model and provide opportunities for peer assessment through conversation, peer editing of written work, deconstructing and connecting the success criteria and offering ideas for potential next steps to a fellow student;
- provide multiple opportunities for discussion about how and where students can transfer learning skills used in the FSL classroom across other subject areas or in everyday life;
- provide scaffolding for students to learn how to develop the skills of using feedback from peer and self-assessment to identify strengths, determine next steps and set personal learning goals;
- model and practise reflective questions with students about their classmates use of strategies. For example, ***“Quelle stratégie d'écoute a été utile pour ton partenaire? Comment est-ce que [ton partenaire] vérifie sa compréhension quand [il/elle] écoute?”*** [The Revised FSL Curriculum, 2013.](#) (p. 69)

Please refer to the following sample tracking/rating sheet, useful for both self and peer assessment:

Stratégie	moi 1 - 5	mon ami(e) 1 - 5
Faire des liens		
Poser des questions quand je/tu ne comprends pas		
Faire des prédictions		
Utiliser des ressources dans la classe		
Utiliser les mots connus		

The importance of students' ability to set goals and reflect on their learning is integral to a successful language learning experience. As emphasized in *The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary* (p. 19) and *secondary* (p. 21) "Because students learn best when they are provided with opportunities to monitor and reflect on their learning, each strand includes an expectation that calls for such reflection." (p. 19) This supports our students in becoming proficient in a second language and in appreciating another culture, as well as better preparing them for engaging in learning and being productive 21st century world citizens.



Resources

Curriculum Services Canada (2012). A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers, Module 6 - Learner Autonomy and Metacognition

<http://www.curriculum.org/fsl/projects/a-guide-to-reflective-practice-for-core-french-teachers>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2010). Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/growsuccess.pdf>

Ontario Ministry of Education, The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core French, Extended French and French Immersion, Grades 9-12, (revised) 2014

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/fsl.html>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2013). The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core, Grades 4–8; Extended, Grades 4–8; Immersion, Grades 1–8, (revised)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/fsl.html>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2008). Literacy GAINS. Connecting Practice and Research: Metacognition Guide

<http://www.edugains.ca/resourcesLIT/CoreResources/MetaGuide-June4%202009.pdf>