

## **Bringing French Learning to Life!**

*Nadia Nosworthy, Former Teacher, Ontario Conference*

In the spring of 2003, the federal government released its comprehensive new plan for official languages in Canada: *The Next Act: New Momentum for Canada's Linguistic Duality. The Action Plan for Official Languages in Canada*. The plan outlines broad priorities for various aspects of Canada's official languages, but for second language education the goal is clear: double the proportion of secondary school graduates with functional proficiency in their second official language by the year 2013. One of the many solutions explored was to improve Core French and Core English programs.

A recent CBC news documentary entitled *Enjeux* investigated the Core French program of two Toronto elementary schools. Reporters interviewed intermediate students who had been taking French for five years. Surprisingly, when asked basic conversational questions students could not understand the questions or respond in French. Sound familiar? I am certain many teachers, parents and students would agree that current methods of teaching Core French aren't working for the majority of students. Enter the Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM). Created by Canadian teacher Wendy Maxwell, this unique program uses gestures to: 1) increase student comprehension, 2) enhance memory retention, 3) help students learn vocabulary without reverting to translation, and 4) present vocabulary and structures kinesthetically, auditorally and visually. Through interactive plays and songs, AIM brings French classes to life. Students are engaged and some will show immersion-like fluency in both oral and written skills.

My personal experience with the AIM program has been nothing but positive. Once the program was implemented students were happier and more enthusiastic about learning French. Some children were even speaking French on the playground and teaching their parents and siblings at home. On one occasion a supply teacher told me she was able to sit back while one of my students led out the entire period!

As educators our job is to inspire and motivate students. I strongly believe that it is our responsibility to provide learners with the tools they need for success. If, then, a teacher's current method isn't properly preparing students, s/he should try something new. As educational expert Rita Dunn once said, "If the child is not learning the way you are teaching, try teaching the way the child learns."

*May God richly bless you in the New Year.*

*Que Dieu vous bénisse.*

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