Ways to Use this FSL Resource

The 2006 research report on teaching French as a Second Language (FSL) indicates that French teachers need information and resources to improve their teaching and cope with the challenges faced in their classrooms (Lapkin, MacFarlane, and Vandergrift, 2006). As FSL teachers, we know that improving our teaching is an ongoing process and we are constantly searching for appropriate materials to support and assist us.

As well, Frank Serafini (2006), a leading researcher and educator in literacy development, indicates that the quality of the classroom teacher, not the resources available to the teacher, is the most important variable in determining effectiveness. He suggests that no significant change in teaching occurs until the teacher also modifies his or her theoretical understandings. This calls for teachers to become reflective practitioners, that is, to reflect on their practice and have many opportunities to develop their theory through first-hand experience.

The purpose of *effective literacy practices in FSL: making connections* is to provide FSL teachers with materials and new information to motivate and engage students and to help them learn French. It will also provide them with opportunities to reflect on their practice and engage themselves in continuous professional learning with support.

The various components of this resource are intended to support the flexible ways in which teachers may choose to use them. The content of the Print Book and e-Book is organized in a linear fashion, and may be used in this way or on a "need to know" basis. The Facilitator's Guide contains study group activities and discussion starters.

FSL teachers may choose to use this FSL resource in a variety of settings:

- as a resource for self-directed learning;

- as part of a professional learning community;

- as a tool for action research in either self-directed learning or professional learning communities;

- as a resource in a pre-service or in-service setting.

Self-directed Learning

Individual FSL teachers may benefit from using this resource in a self-directed manner. They may find it useful to consult Big Ideas 1–5 and the Comprehension Strategies in this book, use the lesson sequences, and view the classroom video clips in the e-Book when planning their lessons. Using the resource in an independent manner allows teachers to dip into any one of the components at their own pace and in their own time.

Self-directed learning does not exclude the possibility of reflective practice. Reflection and personalization are encouraged through the Professional Learning Surveys which are found at the end of this section, as well as at the end of Setting the Context and Big Ideas 1–5. Teachers may also videotape a lesson and self-assess the results or ask a colleague or administrator to observe a particular aspect of their teaching. In this way, individual teachers may use this resource to improve their practice.

> " Continuous learning is often complex and delicate, given the demands that large numbers of students place on the FSL teacher's time. It is worthwhile for teachers, none-the-less, to engage in reflective practice, as longitudinal studies of groups of FSL teachers engaged in curriculum implementation have shown that the value of learning communities lies in the sense making of new practices that participants collaboratively share. "
>
> *(Lewis, 1995; Turnbull, 1998; Carr, 2007)*

Professional Learning Communities

FSL teachers may also use this resource as part of a learning community. Research indicates that student achievement is improved in the long term when teachers work together in collaboration to discuss literature and research, plan action, and reflect upon practice in such a way as to continuously refine instruction (Stoll, Fink, and Earl, 2003). Unfortunately, FSL teachers often find themselves teaching in isolation because they are the only FSL teacher, or one of a few FSL teachers, in a particular school. School districts or teacher associations may wish to organize learning community settings for FSL teachers to provide them with an opportunity to discuss effective practices, learn about emerging ideas, and share concerns and successes along the way. This resource provides materials to support teacher leaders in coaching and mentoring roles.

At the same time, FSL teachers may wish to become an integral part of the school-based literacy learning community, and provide a second-language learning perspective. This resource gives them a common literacy vocabulary with which to discuss school literacy with colleagues in such a setting.

Action Research

When teachers introduce new teaching practices into their classrooms, assess those experiences, and draw conclusions which inform their practice, they are engaged in action research. Also called "teacher inquiry" and "reflective practice," action research encourages teachers to learn from their experiences, and apply what they learn to continuously refine their instruction to better meet the needs of their students.
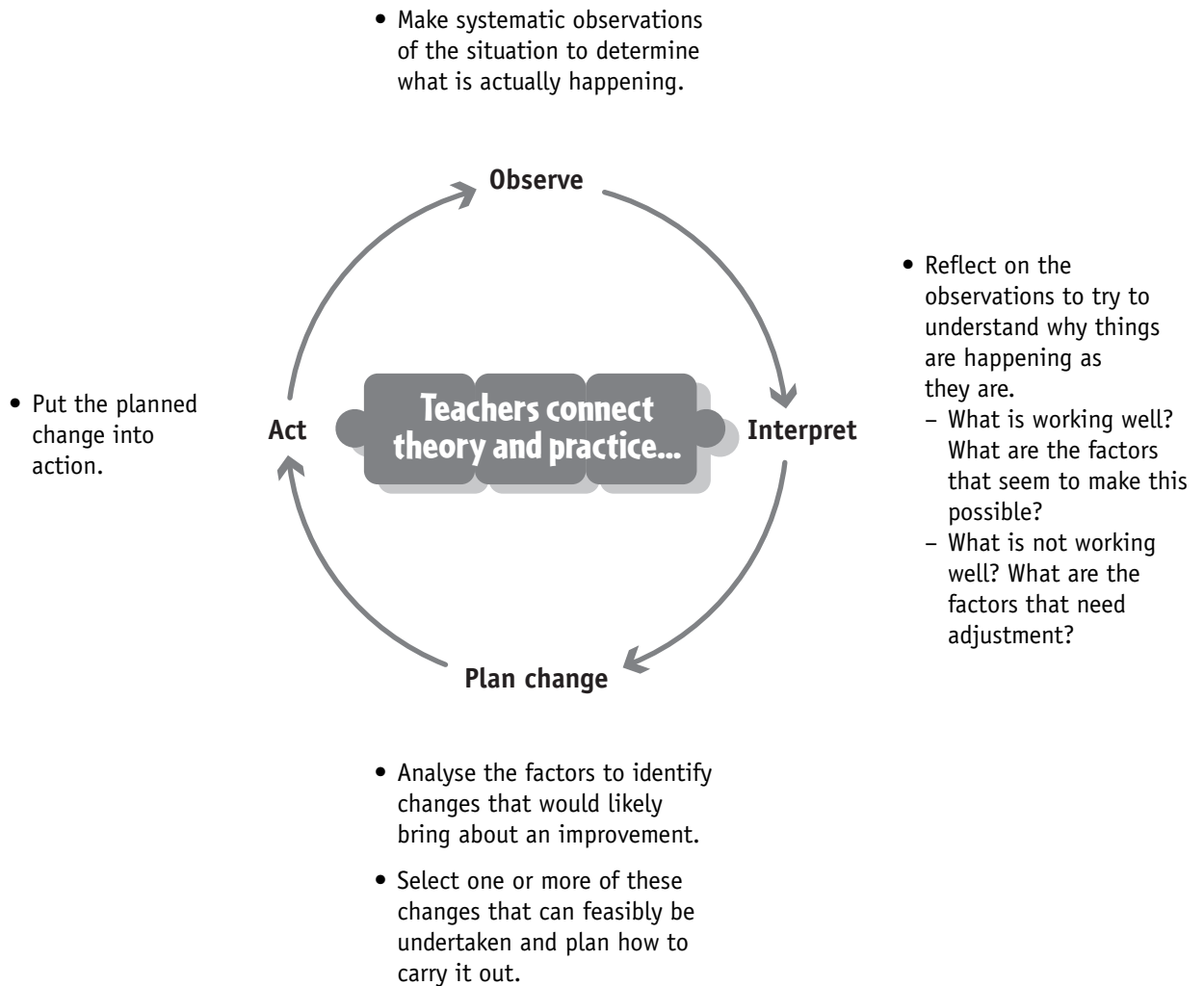
The diagram on the next page (Figure 1) is adapted from the Gordon Wells model (Wells, 1994) as it pertains to professional growth and improves student learning. Teachers may choose to use this model to explore the five modules (Big Ideas 1–5) and the Comprehension Strategies that are presented in this resource. They may individually or collaboratively discuss current practice, view and analyse the classroom video clips in the e-Book which model the practices under discussion, and then try out the lesson sequences.

> And it is in making the connections between practice and theory, as this relationship is constructed and made explicit through the cycle of research, that the practitioner adopts the stance of reflectiveness, which is the hallmark of the teacher researcher.
>
> *(Atwell, 1992; Wells, 1994)*

Figure 1

Action Research

- Make systematic observations of the situation to determine what is actually happening.

Observe

- Reflect on the observations to try to understand why things are happening as they are.
  - What is working well? What are the factors that seem to make this possible?
  - What is not working well? What are the factors that need adjustment?

- Put the planned change into action.

Act

Teachers connect theory and practice...

Interpret

Plan change

- Analyse the factors to identify changes that would likely bring about an improvement.

- Select one or more of these changes that can feasibly be undertaken and plan how to carry it out.

Pre-service and In-service Programs

Teachers in pre-service, in-service, or special qualifications course settings may gain insight from a study of the literacy and second language practices in this resource, although it is not intended to stand alone as a manual of FSL methodology.

Professional Learning on a Continuum

FSL students learn best in learning environments that support risk taking and engagement—so do teachers! In whichever manner you approach this resource in order to make it meaningful for yourself, we encourage you to consider your professional learning on a continuum that is ever evolving given your experiences, language and comfort level, and the shifting needs of your students.

Professional Learning Tools

As an FSL teacher, you may self-assess your strengths at the outset of your engagement with this resource, and think about your professional growth along the way. A Professional Learning Survey is provided as a starting point for you to consider where you are in the development of your teaching skills with regards to the following:

- engaging and motivating students;
- integrating oral language;
- developing language awareness;
- assessing and differentiating;
- activating strategies.

Return to this inventory as you work through this resource and try the various strategies and tactics with your students. *On y va!*