



Top Ten Responsibilities of a Successful Immersion Administrator

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Before program implementation

1. Honestly study district goals and needs.

- Language goals. (What level of fluency in a foreign language is desired?)
- Academic achievement goals. (Should immersion students perform as well as non-immersion students or perform better than non-immersion students?)
- Cultural goals. (Teach a heritage language? Foreign language? What ethnic groups, minorities are in the community? What is the status of the proposed target language in the community?)
- Political and social goals. (See all above. Is desegregation an important objective? What about school improvement? Foreign trade?)
- Official and/or hidden agendas. (Consider administrators, elected officials, and the public. Warning: agendas might be different, even opposite!)
- Reasonable timeline for implementation (18 months minimum).
- Lessons from research and existing programs. (Go and visit some, if possible!)



Kindergarten French immersion students from Iberia Parish, Louisiana, prepare for their Mardi Gras Parade.

2. Inform and involve the public early.

- Publicize. (Use all media.)
- Inform (forums, meetings, consultant presentations).
- Advocate (person to person; advertising campaign; use existing research and literature BUT bring it home).
- Prevent misconceptions (elitist program vs. program open to all; traditional language learning vs. immersion learning; achievements AND limitations of immersion programs).
- Be aware of the public's hidden agenda. (See #1 above.)

3. *Choose a model adapted to the clientele and plan accordingly.*

- Use research and existing immersion programs to make an informed decision about the program model.
- Select a site to house the immersion program. (Consider size, location, student population, leadership, transportation, existing faculty's state of mind and abilities. How will they welcome the program? How will they accept necessary modifications to the current set-up? How will the immersion program affect staffing? How motivated is each and every stakeholder to make it work?)
- Consider staffing for the immersion program (target language teachers: local, foreign certified teachers, native-speaking teaching assistants, Foreign Associate Teachers¹: consider their motivation, personalities, knowledge of target language, of the English language; English language arts teachers: motivation, personality, potential knowledge of the target language).
- Identify support services and locate available funds (websites, parents, grants, district resources, state resources, universities, Chamber of Commerce).
- Estimate costs for impacted departments (attendance; facilities and maintenance; transportation; human resources; accountability; public relations; instructional services).

4. *Establish procedures and follow through.*

- Develop application and registration forms and procedures.
- Consider individual needs (Special Education, including Gifted and Talented students; students identified with a learning or a behavioral disability under the Office of Civil Rights 504 classification; English learners who speak the target language; English learners who speak another language).
- Create late entry and exit policies and procedures.
- Identify principal's responsibilities.
- Establish district supervisors' responsibilities (elementary and foreign languages).
- Hire a lead teacher or coordinator (key qualifications: knowledge of the target language; immersion experience).
- Provide for growth (physical room, feeder school, lateral expansion, other languages, cost previsions).
- Have a Plan B (and even C if necessary)!

During program implementation

5. *Follow lessons learned before implementation and involve each district department.*

- **Accountability Services:**
 - Implement content standards and grade level expectations for all subjects (including target language arts – which might mean writing a new curriculum).
 - Provide translation in the target language when needed.
 - Negotiate necessary accommodations for the immersion setting.
- **Human Resources Services:**
 - Hire highly qualified teachers (target language speaking teachers and English teachers).
 - Set up a process to sponsor Foreign Associate Teachers and/or classroom assistants for long term stays (J1 visas, H1B visas, green cards).

- Instructional Services:
 - ☑ Allocate time appropriately (the more exposure to the target language, the more successful overall).
 - ☑ Offer professional development for all personnel (including administrators, ancillary personnel, non-immersion teachers).
 - ☑ Enforce collaboration among everyone. (Provide time and means.)
 - ☑ Provide adequate equipment and materials. (Do not make the students and their parents feel like second-class citizens. Match English materials, etc.)
 - ☑ Promote positive environment and support (by following the above recommendations).
 - ☑ Do not box in foreign language immersion under the elementary supervisor or the foreign languages supervisor; it belongs to both!
 - ☑ Compute extensive statistics (numbers, racial ratios, academic achievement, late entries, exits and their reasons, attrition, etc.).
 - ☑ Study your program (college research, internal evaluations, conference presentations, grant reports, etc.).

- Facilities and Maintenance Services:
 - ☑ Provide adequate facilities. (Do not make the immersion students and their parents feel like second-class citizens.)
 - ☑ Create a campus where bilingualism is visible (signs, name of school, marquee).

- Public Relations Services:
 - ☑ Advertise events (pre-registration, fairs, school programs) and achievements (scores, scholarships, foreign visitors, opportunities).

- All Stakeholders (parents, ALL teachers, ALL administrators, community, businesses) :
 - ☑ Be visible (your program and yourself).
 - ☑ Take time to educate others about the intellectual, social, and professional benefits of learning a foreign language. Identify which businesses in your community could benefit from bilingual workers. Keep up-to-date with testing statistics and current research.
 - ☑ Let students help fight your battles: Show them on TV, in the papers, on billboards, but also, be ready to let them and their parents argue with your school board members.
 - ☑ Advocate! (Do not rest on your laurels! It is always an uphill battle.)

Don't forget assessment (during and after program implementation)

6. *Use standardized testing (national and/or state) for content (English, Math, Science, Social Studies) in English if testing in the target language is not available in your state and analyze your results carefully.*

7. **Establish an articulated second language proficiency testing program (all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing).**

- ☑ Test for oral language proficiency (comprehension and production). [ELLOPA (for grades preK–2) and SOPA (for grades 2–8) from the Center for Applied Linguistics are excellent tools.]
- ☑ Add writing and reading in upper grades.
- ☑ Include high school credit exams at the end of 7th or 8th grade (and additional placement exams if necessary).

8. **Monitor teacher performance.**

- ☑ Use local criteria and establish criteria for Foreign Associate Teachers. (Evaluate their adaptation to the new system, their personal integration into the school and community, their effort to promote interculturalism.)
- ☑ Pay special attention to classroom management, grading scales, and other cultural differences with Foreign Associate Teachers or teachers who have not been through the US educational system.
- ☑ Verify that your curriculum is appropriate and in line with your district's (in collaboration with the appropriate departments in your school system).
- ☑ Use the information your assessment gives you (administrators and teachers).

9. **Be proactive in the growth of your program. Always be thinking about new ways to keep the interest level high and enrollment stable.**

10. **Believe in your program. Stay positive.**

“... As an immersion teacher in an immersion program, you have to be absolutely convinced that what you're doing is not harmful for [your] students from an academic and native language point of view because if you have any qualms ... it's going to impact on your delivery of the program and that hesitation will ... be more worrisome than the program per se.”

(This is valid for administrators and parents as well.)

~Fred Genesee

(October 2, 1999, as quoted in *The ACIE Newsletter*, November 1999)

“Anyone who says he can get along in the United States without English is a fool. Anyone who thinks he can enter the 21st century without two languages is a greater fool.”

~Samuel Betances

(personal communication, Sandy Labry, 1998)

“Most people in this world are bilingual. We, in this country, are the aberration.”

~Else Hamayan

(personal communication, 2001)

1. The Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) has signed accords with the governments of several French-speaking countries allowing them to recruit teaching candidates under J-1 visas. Under immigration rules, these teachers are referred to as Foreign Associate Teachers. For more information about this program, see Immersion Advocacy and the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana in the February 2003 issue of *The ACIE Newsletter*, www.carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/.