



*Ma place est ici!
/ I belong here!*



RESEARCH REPORT

Contributions of the “*Ma place est ici! / I belong here!*” Project

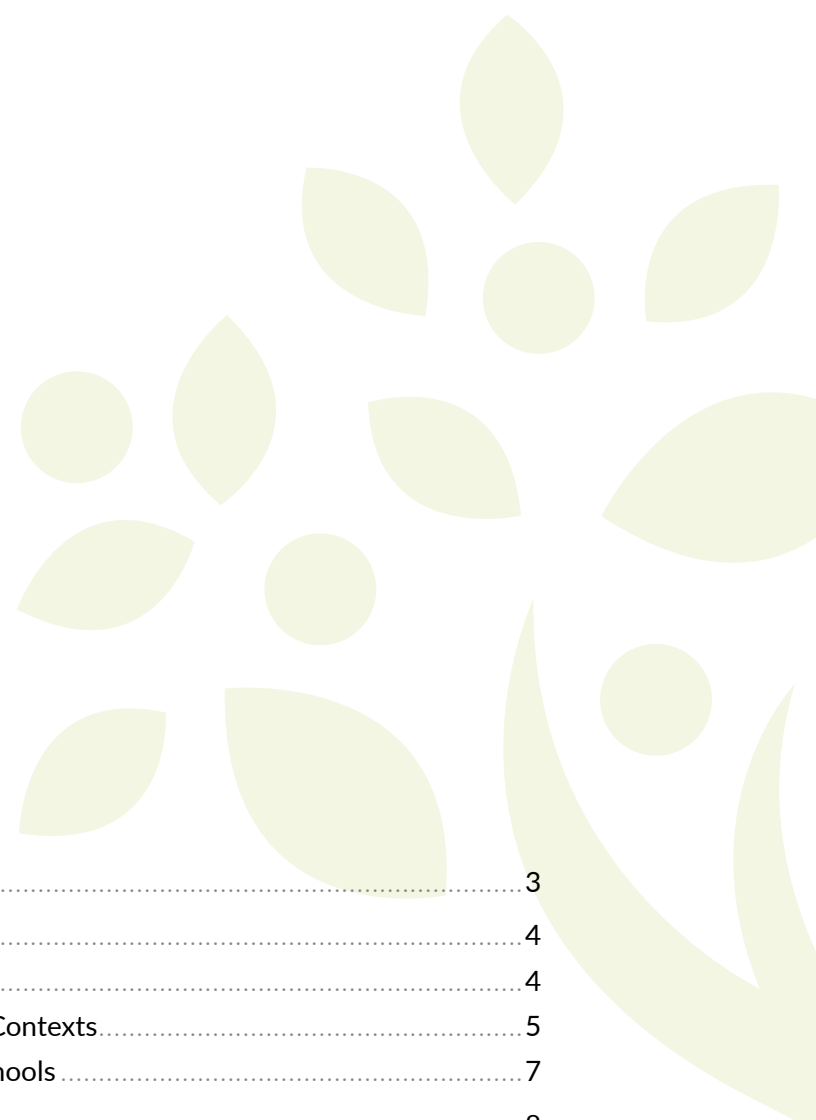
Report presented to: LEARN

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1. CONTEXT

In 2022, approximately 83,649 young Quebecers were enrolled in the province’s English-language public school system (Ministère de l’Éducation du Québec, 2025). Within this network, students learn French as a second language through various programs – including core and immersion streams at the elementary level, and core and enriched programs at the secondary level.

Numerous consultations and studies over recent decades have documented the challenges faced by members of the English-speaking community (with English-eligibility) throughout school and into their adult life. These challenges include a high rate of interprovincial migration and declining school enrollment (Advisory Board on English Education, 2018; Lamarre, 2012; Ravensbergen, 2020), as well as difficulties related to French proficiency (Ravensbergen, 2020) and linguistic identity (Donovan, 2025).

To address these challenges, LEARN launched the project *Ma place est ici! / I belong here!*—a series of learning opportunities offered from 2020 to 2025 designed to promote both bilingualism and a sense of belonging to Quebec society among students in the English-language school system, through artistic and community-based activities. On average, 33 schools and 1,214 students across Quebec participated in the project each year. The research team’s mandate was to assess the contributions of this initiative. More specifically, the following objectives guided the research:

1. To explore students’ perspectives on the role of language in their sense of belonging to Quebec society.
2. To better understand the value and perceived impact of connecting language learning with its real-life use within Quebec society – particularly through the “I belong here” project.
3. To examine the role and impact of artists and broader community members in the classroom.

This report presents a literature review on the core themes, followed by an overview of the methodology. Key findings are then detailed, and the report concludes with a series of recommendations for stakeholders.



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 BELONGING AND BILINGUALISM

Generally speaking, belonging to a group refers to “the feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared belief that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). Breton (2002) proposed a typology of belonging for francophone minority communities, which Gérin-Lajoie (2019) adapted for anglophone communities in Quebec.

The first dimension emphasizes a utilitarian view of language, where linguistic competence is seen as a strategic advantage for the minority group. Benefiting from this competence - through interactions with social networks and institutions that use the language - contributes to a positive sense of belonging.

The second dimension focuses on the interdependence between the individual and the group, where collective efforts are believed to improve individual conditions. Those who value collective over individual mobility tend to develop a stronger sense of belonging.

The third dimension relates to the community’s distinctive characteristics (language, cultural heritage, religion, etc.) and how individuals perceive themselves in relation to it. Belonging develops when there is coherence between one’s identity and the community’s socio-cultural and historical roots. Belonging may vary along a continuum across these dimensions.

Belonging develops through social practices. It is fluid and varies with personal and collective experiences. For youth, these experiences include family, friendships, and school (Gérin-Lajoie, 2019; Vieux-Fort & Pilote, 2010, 2013). Therefore, educational environments must ensure that learning conditions, social interactions, and activities support self-reflection and identity construction (Lau et al., 2023). Youth perceptions of linguistic groups are influenced by community, local, provincial, national, and international interactions (Magnan et al., 2018, 2021).



For example, studies show urban anglophone youth often identify with groups in relation to their proximity, most commonly identifying with their school, city, and local anglophone communities while also feeling part of a broader English-speaking world (Gérin-Lajoie, 2016; Groff et al., 2016). Belonging is thus multi-faceted, dynamic, and shaped by social context.

Some minority anglophone youth in Quebec claim bilingual or multilingual identities (Gérin-Lajoie, 2016; Lamarre, 2007; Magnan et al., 2021; Vieux-Fort & Pilote, 2010, 2013). Many remain strongly attached to English and anglophone groups; some identify partially as francophone without necessarily considering themselves Québécois (Groff et al., 2016; Magnan et al., 2021). Identifying with one linguistic group should not be interpreted as rejecting others (Lefebvre, 2006; Magnan, 2018). Some youth adopt “bilingual” as a third identity category to avoid the francophone-anglophone binary (Magnan, 2018; Vieux-Fort & Pilote, 2010, 2013).

Identity claims vary by geography and speaker density. For instance, youth in francophone-majority regions are more likely to identify as bilingual than those in predominantly anglophone areas like western Montreal (Landry et al., 2013).

A lack of confidence in French skills and linguistic insecurity may hinder identification with francophone groups more than actual language use (Magnan et al., 2018). This is consistent with Levasseur’s (2020) findings in English Canada, where youth receiving French-language support hesitate to call themselves francophone due to perceived low competence. Stereotypes, feelings of inclusion or exclusion (Gérin-Lajoie, 2016), and daily interactions also shape how individuals align with or distance themselves from particular linguistic groups.

2.2 LANGUAGE LEARNING IN AUTHENTIC CONTEXTS

In the field of second language teaching, the communicative approach remains one of the most influential in classrooms today (East, 2021; Spada, 2007, 2018). It views language as a tool for real-life communication. Thus, teaching emphasizes interaction and the exchange of meaning over grammar rules and form (Lightbown & Spada, 2021; Long, 2015).

This approach stresses the need to offer learners opportunities to use the language in authentic ways and develop practical communication skills (e.g., narrating, thanking, or describing) (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). From a pedagogical standpoint, this translates into an emphasis on authenticity, where educators engage language learners by exposing them to real-world situations and materials (Piccardo, 2014).



Action-oriented approaches to teaching a second language position learners as social actors, inviting them to actively engage in meaningful tasks that connect to broader social contexts beyond the classroom (Council of Europe, 2001; 2020). Thus, learners are encouraged to actively engage in real and meaningful tasks (Payant and Michaud, 2020), which take place in a broader social context than that of the classroom. Through their actions, learners draw on all of their personal resources – beyond just language skills – to achieve a given goal (Piccardo, 2014). These tasks don't aim simply to practice the target language, but rather to solve a problem or complete a mission—often resulting in a product or performance (CEFR Expert Group, 2023, p. 39).

Project-based learning aligns well with these principles. It's experiential, encourages real-world use of language, and supports skills like problem-solving, collaboration, and creative thinking (Beckett & Slater, 2018). Because of their nature, such projects create authentic opportunities for language use (Alvin, 2018).

These tasks offer rich opportunities for oral interaction. Learners are exposed to natural language, take risks to communicate, refine their output for better understanding, and receive feedback from peers and instructors (Gass & Mackey, 2020; Loewen & Sato, 2024). Collaboration fosters mutual support and allows learners to scaffold each other through complex tasks (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014, 2020; Swain, 2006).

Language acquisition is also influenced by learner characteristics as well as the context in which learning occurs (Robinson, 2002). For instance, language anxiety can reduce willingness to speak (Zuniga & Simard, 2022), while positive emotions can expand learners' cognitive capacity (Oxford, 2017). Teachers can promote these emotions through frequent use of the target language and humor (Dewaele et al., 2025).

Identity texts, such as personal or family narratives, support language learning by engaging learners' linguistic and cultural resources. Identity texts can be produced using the written word, orally, or in a multimodal form, showcasing the richness of students' linguistic backgrounds (Cummins, 2007; Maynard & Armand, 2016; Prasad, 2015; Sales et al., 2023). They also support engagement in complex and critical learning (Lau et al., 2021) and validate all language varieties, even partial competencies (Canagarajah & Liyanage, 2012; Forbes & Rutgers, 2021; Moore, 2006).

IDENTITY TEXTS, SUCH AS PERSONAL OR FAMILY NARRATIVES, SUPPORT LANGUAGE LEARNING BY ENGAGING LEARNERS' LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES.

2.3 ARTISTS AND THE COMMUNITY IN SCHOOLS

The presence of artists in schools stems from the view of art as a dynamic experience, not a static object (Beaudry et al., 2024). From this perspective, visiting artists act as catalysts for change within the classroom, enabling students to experience “emergent and unexpected experiences of literacy learning” (Crampton & Lewis, 2020, p. 448), while encouraging artistic creation and/or appreciation. While artists’ visits are often brief, they can foster meaningful self-expression among students (Carroll, 2018; Dezutter et al., 2019; Lemonchois, 2017). Multiple obstacles, notably, financial and logistical barriers, often limit the frequency of these initiatives (Dezutter et al., 2019). Teachers play a key role in amplifying the impact of artists in schools. The teacher’s stance can also strongly influence the extent of the artist’s participation, especially when students are not prepared for the artist’s arrival and when the teacher does not build on or reinforce the learning introduced by the artist afterward (Dezutter et al., 2019; Lemonchois, 2015).

When in the classroom, artists typically guide a creative process involving intention-setting, adjustments, and choices (Lemonchois, 2015). While the initial intentions are generally defined by the artists, a general theme may be imposed by others (such as the teacher or an organization); in such cases, the artist can encourage students to take ownership of the theme. Intentions can be refined through a series of reflective activities followed by a decision-making process in which students have a certain degree of autonomy – although this autonomy may be relative, as the artist sometimes intervenes to ensure the production aligns with artistic criteria (Lemonchois, 2015). As examples of such intentions, Lemonchois mentions students selecting the most appropriate phrases to include in a musical piece, followed by the artist deciding which parts will appear in the final performance.

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More and more researchers are interested in the potential of diverse artistic productions, which can offer empowering forms of expression for students. Artistic experiences can be deeply meaningful when art is co-constructed by an artist and students (Lemonchois, 2015). Creating films or multimodal projects can connect school, home, and community life (Almohammad, 2022). These experiences help students explore and critique popular culture (Anderson & Macleroy, 2017), while empowering them to express multifaceted identities (Almohammad, 2022; Anderson et Macleroy, 2017). Meetings with authors or illustrators help students relate to real creators, demystify the writing process, and increase motivation to read and write (Dezutter et al., 2019).

Artists’ presence also benefits teachers by modeling new pedagogical practices, fostering dialogue, and revealing students’ hidden talents and perspectives (Lemonchois, 2017). For artists, working in schools builds community ties and enriches their own practice (Lemonchois, 2015).

Inviting community members into language classrooms, or incorporating community service components, supports intercultural exchange, increases learner motivation, and makes learning more meaningful (Parra, 2013). Such initiatives help develop critical thinking and validate learners as users of the target language. However, they require significant teacher effort, can present logistical challenges and are harder to sustain due to staff turnover in community organizations (Parra, 2013).

3. METHODOLOGY

To meet the objectives outlined above, several types of data were considered:

3.1 DATA COLLECTION BY LEARN

As part of their participation in the project, teachers complete a feedback questionnaire each year. The research team analyzed the 23 responses from the 2024–2025 questionnaire, as well as responses from the 2020–2021 and 2022–2023 editions. In addition, each year, the LEARN team organizes a focus group with the artists who took part in the project. The research team therefore attended sessions with four artists, each lasting about one hour. These sessions were audio-recorded.

3.2 SECONDARY DATA

The team had access to annual reports produced by the organization (LEARN, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024), as well as public artifacts such as student productions, photos, and videos available on the LEARN website. Student work included zines and digital stories. The team also reviewed the preliminary version of the 2024–2025 report and additional artifacts (e.g., photos, videos of student-led community projects, digital narratives).

3.3 DATA COLLECTION BY THE RESEARCH TEAM (2024–2025)

The research team conducted semi-structured individual interviews with people involved in the project. An email was sent to the 26 lead teachers responsible for the project in their schools in 2024–2025. Of these, five agreed to participate in interviews. Additionally, three individuals involved in the project at LEARN—holding roles in management, coordination, or pedagogical support—were interviewed. These online interviews (approximately 45 minutes each) were audio-recorded.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The interview and focus group recordings were listened to multiple times, and a detailed summary was written for each. These summaries highlighted recurring or particularly significant themes from the participants' accounts, especially relating to bilingual community belonging, use of French, and the roles of artists and community members.

Secondary data helped illustrate the key points raised by participants. In presenting the findings, sources are indicated using an alphanumeric code. Data from questionnaires are marked with “Q” and interviews (entrevues) with “E.” These are further categorized by participant role: “E” for educators, “A” for artists, and “R” for LEARN employees (les responsables).

For example, “QE16” refers to the questionnaire completed by educator #16.



4. FINDINGS

4.1 OBJECTIVE 1: STUDENTS' SENSE OF BELONGING TO QUEBEC SOCIETY

The first research objective explored how the project influenced students' sense of belonging to Quebec society through the lens of language. Findings from annual reports, artifacts, and interviews with educators and artists indicate that the project created opportunities for students to reflect on identity and belonging. For some teachers, the project allowed students to assert identities that were meaningful to them: *"You belong where you decide to make your place"* (EE5).

More broadly, students were able to express themselves through zines, by sharing personal stories and by exploring their bilingual experiences (QE13). A review of the artifacts shows that students reflected on bilingualism and identity. For instance, some stories portrayed characters experiencing misunderstandings due to speaking only one language. One student wrote in a zine: *"I tried to tell you—speaking just one language can kill,"* while another humorously illustrated the divide between Anglophones and Francophones with a coin labeled *"a divided currency"* (zines, 2023–2024). One artist remarked that the creative process opened the door to a bilingual world (EA1).

Reports noted that even shy students found ways to express themselves freely on personal topics—such as how the pandemic affected their sense of community or their concerns about transitioning to high school—topics also mentioned by both a teacher (QE17) and an artist (EA3). One LEARN employee involved in the project explained that a key goal was to give students a voice and help them build human connections. Art was chosen as a medium because it could support young people's expression when words failed. One artist described how the project helped a typically silent student open up and communicate. A teacher highlighted the inclusive nature of the project, noting: *"Often, we don't ask [students with special needs] many questions. Most of them had never thought about it—I live in a French environment, I'm Anglophone—how do I feel about that?' They had never asked themselves that question"* (EE2).



In addition, the teacher-planned activities helped students make connections between bilingualism, language, and identity. Students realized they used French more often than they thought, and one teacher noted it helped them *“take ownership and feel proud of their bilingualism.”* More specifically, she explains that they became aware that their language skills allow them to communicate in French in their daily lives: ‘They identified parts of their lives where they truly are bilingual (EE1). Students identified real-life contexts where they use French—at school, during sports, and in extracurricular activities (QE1, QE4, QE8). Artifacts such as zine titles like *“My Bilingual Life”* and *“My Life in French”* reflected this realization. However, artists mentioned that discussions were easier at the secondary level than at the elementary level, where younger students had more difficulty grasping complex themes. This was echoed by a teacher (EE5) and observed in the 2020–2021 feedback. Still, two artists emphasized the importance of nurturing a positive relationship with French from a young age to build pride in bilingualism (EA3, EA4).

By providing opportunities to speak French, the projects helped make bilingualism more tangible and meaningful (QE3, EA2). One teacher, reflecting on a community project, said that seeing Anglophone and Francophone students support one another in translation and form friendships *“showed how bilingualism can thrive when it’s lived, not just taught”* (QE8). Students’ perspectives seemed to evolve over time: *“At the start of the year, it was like, ‘I don’t need French.’ But now it’s like—‘It’s beautiful if you speak two languages, even three. You’re Quebecois. You’re here”* (EE4). An artist also noted that the project helped students connect with Quebec culture (EA4).

Teachers acknowledged the challenges students face in claiming a bilingual identity when their French skills are limited. *“Some struggle in French, so we approached bilingualism as an existing resource to be developed more than an acquired skill”* (QE12). Reports and teacher feedback (RE1, QE1, QE13, QE17) highlighted students’ pride in their bilingualism—whether during community projects or while exploring their bilingual lives. By embracing their bilingual identity, students discovered more about their communities, expressed themselves creatively (QE16), and built relationships with French-speaking individuals. These encounters sometimes led to deeper conversations (QE11). Earlier feedback also emphasized the value of projects that foster critical reflection and offer multiple modes of self-expression.

ONE TEACHER, REFLECTING ON A COMMUNITY PROJECT, SAID THAT SEEING ANGLOPHONE AND FRANCOPHONE STUDENTS SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER IN TRANSLATION AND FORM FRIENDSHIPS “SHOWED HOW BILINGUALISM CAN THRIVE WHEN IT’S LIVED, NOT JUST TAUGHT”

4.2 OBJECTIVE 2: LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH REAL-WORLD USE

The second objective aimed to better understand the value and impact of projects that connect language learning to real-life use within Quebec society. It should be noted that starting in 2023–2024, the project “Ma place est ici! / I belong here!” placed specific emphasis on developing students’ French language skills. Those responsible for the project at LEARN reported that this shift responded to needs expressed by schools that wanted to promote French second language learning (ER1, ER2). Political and social factors, such as legislative changes affecting French in CEGEPs, also played a role in the decision (ER2).

Generally, teachers described the projects as a positive experience for students learning French. Of the 23 teachers who responded to the 2024–2025 feedback survey, 17 rated the experience as “very positive,” and six as “somewhat positive.”

That said, some interviews suggested that although the projects created opportunities to use French, they did not necessarily lead to measurable linguistic gains (EE1, EE2, EE3). As one teacher noted, it is necessary to consider all the school activities carried out throughout the year and during the students’ schooling in order to truly observe an improvement in their language skills (EE1). Given the project’s relatively short duration, its contribution may lie more in supporting long-term goals. This may also depend on student profiles, class composition (e.g., students with special needs), or how well the activity matched students’ language levels (QE2, QE3). Furthermore, creative processes and discussions in students’ second-language take time—a limited resource in such projects (QE17).





Nevertheless, the nature of the projects encouraged greater use and exposure to French, especially through interactions with new French speakers—artists and community members. One teacher noted that her students expanded their vocabulary through exposure to project-specific terms (QE11). Artists were also aware of the importance of exposing students to French, while recognizing the value of using English strategically to build trust and aid comprehension when needed (EA1, EA2). The projects fostered greater student engagement with French, helping them accomplish tasks: “[...] students were more engaged and found French more enjoyable, which motivated them to pursue more difficult tasks” (QE11). Another teacher noted that the musical component of her project encouraged students to make extra efforts in communicating in French (EE4).

The projects’ authenticity motivated students to practice French, supporting the development of linguistic competencies—particularly oral skills. One teacher involved in a community project reported that English-speaking students felt motivated to use their French in a real-life setting, often picking up new words and phrases during games (QE8). The data set, including reports, also highlight opportunities for active language use in student productions (e.g., restaurant menus, gifts for seniors, songs, videos). Projects involving cooking, music, or sports led students to use French to complete a variety of tasks. For example, *“Working together to plan and film in French\English strengthened their connection to the language and showed them how it can be used for real, collaborative communication”* (QE15).

PROJECT FORMATS SUPPORTED ORAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT, PARTICULARLY FLUENCY. IN THE “DIGITAL STORY” OPTION, STUDENTS HAD TO REPEAT THEIR CONTENT WHILE RECORDING VIDEOS OR SONGS. IN THE “TAKE ACTION” OPTION, MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS HELPED DEVELOP FLUENCY.

Project formats also supported oral skill development, particularly fluency. In the “Digital Story” option, students often had to repeat their content while recording videos or songs. In the “Take Action” option, meaningful conversations with community members helped develop fluency (QE11). One teacher shared that students improved their French by practicing and singing several songs (QE6).

Importantly, the project offered a playful, pressure-free context for using French outside of evaluative settings. This allowed students to use the language more naturally: *“They weren’t thinking about French—they were thinking about the game and what they could do with their minds,”* said one teacher

(QE20). Students used French primarily to build friendships and be understood (EA3, QE8, QE15). One teacher said that during the artist’s visit, students were so engaged they didn’t even realize they were speaking in French (EE5).

The relaxed atmosphere also encouraged communication in French, without placing an emphasis on linguistic accuracy. Teachers noted that their students felt free to experiment with language without fear of errors (EA3, EA4, EE3, QE8, QE18). One zine, for example, explored the term “golf club” in English, used to reference a place with equipment, compared to “club de golf” in French, which can refer to a team of golfers, illustrating how basic misunderstandings can arise. One teacher appreciated seeing students “*trying, making an effort [in French], and not being afraid to make mistakes or hold back because they weren’t fluent or fully bilingual*” (EE3). This attitude even extended beyond the classroom—parents at a community event pushed past their discomfort to speak French. The reports likewise highlight that the projects promoted risk-taking. One teacher concluded that her students realized their level in French didn’t limit them—in fact, it enabled big accomplishments, showing how such projects can validate partial language skills (EE5).

4.3 OBJECTIVE 3: THE ROLE OF ARTISTS AND BROADER COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Several data sources emphasize that the presence of an artist or community member in the classroom significantly boosted student engagement. In fact, 21 out of 23 teachers who responded to the 2024–2025 feedback survey said that having an artist or community member present led to greater student engagement. Similarly, 2020–2021 feedback highlighted heightened engagement, increased creativity, enthusiasm between sessions, and a sense of unity and trust between students and the artist.

Factors contributing to this engagement included the artist’s expertise and personal qualities. First, the artist’s knowledge and skills enriched the classroom experience (EE1, EE2). As one teacher put it: “*It’s because they bring something I don’t*” (EE1). That same teacher noted that simply sharing their bilingual experiences can make artists a source of inspiration. One artist created a sample zine about their own linguistic and academic journey to model the creative process and share the personal role of languages in their life (EA1). Other artists mentioned that their own linguistic background helped demonstrate the value of bilingualism (EA1, EA3).



Students were also more engaged when interacting with someone new who showed genuine interest in them (EA1, EA2, EA3, EA4, EE5). The project format allowed artists to build special connections with certain students—particularly those who might not usually be emotionally available for learning—helping them get involved and experience success (EA2). Additionally, artists’ personal qualities (e.g., flexibility, energy, passion, ease with children, communication skills) were seen as strengths in feedback from 2020–2021 and 2022–2023, as well as in the reports and interviews (EE1, EE2, EE4, EE5). In contrast, projects involving artists perceived as less flexible or less engaged seem to have generated less enthusiasm.

As for teacher-artist collaboration, most teachers from the 2020–2021 and 2022–2023 cohorts described it positively. In 2024–2025, four interviewed teachers said the collaboration went smoothly. However, while artists recognized the considerable and admirable work of teachers, they noted challenges tied to collaboration. They would have appreciated knowing more about class composition and having more contact with the teacher beforehand (EA2, EA3). Some artists also felt the project was not adequately introduced to students before their arrival, requiring them to provide more context themselves. All four artists mentioned that they were able to help students exceed expectations and highlight their strengths (EA1, EA2, EA3, EA4). At times, teachers were so enthusiastic that they temporarily stepped back from their educational role, inadvertently putting more responsibility on the artist.

THE PROJECT FORMAT ALLOWED ARTISTS TO BUILD SPECIAL CONNECTIONS WITH CERTAIN STUDENTS – PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO MIGHT NOT USUALLY BE EMOTIONALLY AVAILABLE FOR LEARNING – HELPING THEM GET INVOLVED AND EXPERIENCE SUCCESS

Some logistical themes also emerged in the analysis—specifically, scheduling, format, and choice of art discipline. Regarding scheduling, teachers reported that the time allocated for the artist was sometimes insufficient. This applied both to the number and spacing of sessions and to the overall project duration. Many teachers wished the artist could spend more time in the classroom and that the project could unfold over a longer period. This would allow for deeper student involvement and reduce the need to rush (EE1, EE2, QE2, EE5, 2022–2023 feedback). This time constraint often led to a division of roles where teachers focused on the belonging theme, while artists handled the artistic component—an integrated effort would require more time (EE1). Teachers from the 2020–2021 cohort also mentioned feeling rushed due to the amount of work that needed to be done in each session. They would have appreciated a few extra weeks to complete the project. Two artists acknowledged the time limitations while recognizing the logistical constraints of organizing visits (EA3, EA4). LEARN employees involved in the management of the project are aware of this issue, but one explained that the chosen model allows more students to participate in the project (ER1).

As for the project format, most teachers who discussed this said that in-person visits generated more excitement and engagement than virtual ones (EE5, 2020–2021 and 2022–2023 feedback). Technical issues, student passivity, and weaker student-artist relationships were noted as challenges during virtual sessions (EE5), a view shared by two artists (EA3, EA4). For schools in remote areas, this project was often a rare chance to host artists, given limited human and financial resources for organizing arts activities (ER1) or for supporting French learning in isolated Anglophone communities (EA3).



One artist remarked that the project “gave [students in remote areas] the chance to have experiences, to be in contact, to move [...]. The experience was incredible—it felt like the whole school got involved” (EA4).

Teachers appreciated the range of artistic disciplines offered, which allowed them to align projects with students’ preferences each year and avoid repetition in multi-grade classrooms (EE2, EE5). Project leaders at LEARN emphasized the value of varying the participating artists annually so students could explore different disciplines. The reports also mention the inclusion of less traditional or tech-based creative formats (e.g., puppet making, podcast creation). This variety helps appeal to different teachers, depending on their interests (ER1). That said, LEARN employee noted a trend of re-inviting artists who were especially appreciated.

Finally, projects that involved community members were also highly valued by participants (EE2, EE3, ER1, ER2). Reports indicate that such projects promote understanding of the concept of community and help build intergenerational relationships. For example, some projects involved visits to seniors’ residences for intergenerational discussions, organizing games for the community, or hosting activities for younger children. According to one project manager at LEARN (ER2), these projects supported schools’ desire to engage their communities in student learning and to build connections—especially when Anglophone schools are located in Francophone communities. However, these community-based projects often required more teacher involvement in organizing and coordinating activities with local organizations or individuals, whereas artistic activities were mostly coordinated by LEARN (ER1). Teachers expressed a desire for more logistical support so they could focus on the pedagogical aspects: “One of the main areas for improvement would be the development of clear frameworks and logistical support. Planning [the activity] involves coordination with external staff, aligning schedules, preparing activities, and ensuring students are emotionally and linguistically ready.” (QE11).

TEACHERS APPRECIATED THE RANGE OF ARTISTIC DISCIPLINES OFFERED, WHICH ALLOWED THEM TO ALIGN PROJECTS WITH STUDENTS’ PREFERENCES EACH YEAR AND AVOID REPETITION IN MULTI-GRADE CLASSROOMS.

All in all, findings tied to the three objectives explored suggest that the project ‘*Ma place est ici! / I belong here!*’ project offers, through collaboration with artists and community members, very interesting and engaging opportunities for learning and reflection for participants.



5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above findings, several non-exhaustive recommendations can be made to guide the project's continued development.

Key strengths to maintain include:

- the diversity of experiences and options offered (variety of artists, mediums, and community-based project possibilities);
- support for reflection on belonging and bilingualism;
- the autonomy given to teachers, who are not burdened with complex administrative tasks (e.g., a short funding application, simple and accessible feedback process).

The project's **accessibility across the province** is also a strength, along with its emphasis on enjoyment, artistic experience, warm human relationships, and collaboration. The materials provided by the LEARN team—particularly the discussion questions—are seen as helpful resources and could be leveraged even more effectively.

Flexibility is a **key success factor**, especially given the diversity of audiences (elementary, secondary, urban, rural, students with special needs, etc.). It is important to remind teachers that they may adapt their project with their students after funding is secured, so they can better respond to unexpected circumstances, adjust to students' language levels, and take advantage of new ideas that emerge during implementation.

On a logistical level, supporting the agency of artists and teachers means favoring flexible project formats. Decisions about the number of sessions, their spacing, and the time of year could vary according to context. It may also be wise to provide more structure to the initial contact between artist and teacher—for example, through a shared form that compiles key information (e.g., class composition) and clarifies mutual expectations (e.g., who will introduce the project to students, who will initiate the first discussion, etc.).



For “**Take Action**” projects, it would be helpful to provide an organizational toolkit for community projects, including sample permission forms, safety protocols, and pedagogical sheets to support student-community interaction.

As for the **format**, we recommend continuing with in-person projects, which appear to lead to more positive experiences and richer opportunities to speak French, while also promoting greater equity among English-speaking youth across Quebec, regardless of location.

On a pedagogical level, it may be useful for LEARN to support teachers in reflecting on their own practices by adding a pedagogical specialist to the project team. This person could help teachers think through their projects and design interdisciplinary learning activities (e.g., music, English, arts, social studies).

They could also help teachers explore ways to maximize language learning opportunities within their projects (e.g., by promoting oral interactions or linking language and culture). Additionally, this resource could assist teachers who wish to adapt the LEARN-provided materials to better suit their classroom diversity and students’ needs.

Beyond adapting teaching materials, it would be valuable to better structure post-project reflections on bilingualism and belonging, by offering more concrete guidance. The suggested resources (pedagogical materials, planning tools, the community project toolkit mentioned above) should also be customizable so teachers can tailor them to their specific educational contexts.

THE VALUE OF BILINGUALISM AND STUDENT CONNECTIONS TO FRENCH

POST-PROJECT INSIGHTS SHARED BY TEACHERS

“What may have once felt like a classroom obligation took on new meaning as they communicated directly with [Seniors] whose lives had been shaped by the French language and Quebec culture...students experienced firsthand how language can bridge generations. It wasn't about perfect grammar or vocabulary; it was about being understood, and more importantly, about making others feel seen and valued.”

– Teacher, Pontiac High School at WQSB

“By using French – for many as a second language – they not only practiced and strengthened their language skills but also deepened their personal connection to French culture.”

– Charlyne Labelle, Arundel Elementary School at SWLSB

“Les élèves ont dû penser à leur bilinguisme de façon sérieuse pour la première fois de leur vie pour la plupart. Certains pensaient ne pas avoir une grande place pour le français dans leur vie, mais se sont rendus compte qu'ils interagissent en français plus souvent qu'ils ne le pensent. Même ceux qui ne parlent français qu'à l'école. J'ai vu de la fierté dans les yeux de plusieurs élèves qui ont l'occasion de parler français dans leur vie sportive ou parascolaire.”

– Karine Deschamps, Westpark Elementary at LBPSB

“Students expressed pride in being bilingual and recognized the value of French as a second language. Many shared how learning French opened up new opportunities for communication and connection with others.”

– Brittanie Romito, Maple Grove Elementary School at LBPSB

“[Students] were proud to be able to offer a bilingual environment to the younger participants, recognizing the value of fostering both linguistic and cultural inclusion.... The experience genuinely empowered them, helping them recognize their own growth in confidence, leadership skills, and bilingual communication. They became more aware of their ability to lead authentically in both French and English.”

– Fannie Marsh, Quebec High School at CQSB

Bilingualism is like having a superpower.
SOPHIE, AGE 16

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