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DEL F in 8th Grade

A Teacher's Guide

@TCDSB2018

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DEL F (Diplôme d'études en langue française) in 8th grade A Teacher's Guide © 2024
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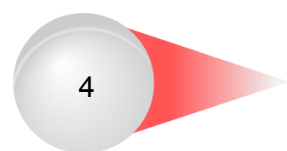
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Acknowledgements

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Our gratitude also goes to Dominique Scheffel-Dunand for her support in bringing this project to fruition. Your efforts to promote bilingualism within the educational system will have a lasting impact on the learning of French in Ontario and beyond.

Overview of the initiative :

The Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) has initiated a pilot project to implement the DELF exam for Grade 8 students. The key objectives of this initiative include:

- Adopting a standardized framework for assessing students' language proficiency.
- Gathering data to classify students' proficiency levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and sharing these results with secondary schools.
- Collecting feedback from students about the DELF experience to encourage risk-taking in language learning.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of French as a Second Language (FSL) instruction by analyzing test results.
- Developing an accurate profile of students' language skills, such as identifying strengths in oral production versus gaps in listening comprehension.
- Enhancing the overall effectiveness of the FSL program.

What is DELF scolaire in Ontario?

DELF Scolaire is available to students aged 12 to 18 in Ontario, offering certification at levels A1, A2, B1, and B2. It serves as an objective measure of students' French language skills.

Why DELF in Grade 8?

In Ontario, students typically receive around 640 hours of Core French instruction over eight years, with more hours in Intensive or Immersion programs. However, they often complete elementary education without a formal assessment of their language skills. DELF provides a standardized framework that measures and describes language

proficiency, informing students and parents of their achievement levels according to an international benchmark and helping Grade 9 teachers better understand incoming students' proficiency levels.

Students often complete their elementary education without a formal test of their language skills. DELF, as a common framework, not only describes and measures the language skills of learners, but also tracks their progress. DELF at this level informs students and their parents of the level reached according to an international assessment system, and helps ninth-grade teachers to better understand each student's situation.

The aim of DELF

DELF assesses authentic language use by placing students in real-world communication scenarios. It evaluates the ability to use the language in practical contexts, prompting language behaviors that might not otherwise be demonstrated without the exam.

Benefits for Teachers

DELF influences classroom teaching by promoting action-oriented and communicative approaches aligned with real-world contexts, consistent with CEFR standards. This alignment encourages teachers to:

- Create congruence between classroom activities and DELF tasks.
- Integrate more authentic materials into teaching.
- Adopt interactive pedagogies that emphasize speaking, critical thinking, and differentiated instruction.
- Reform classroom assessment practices to foster critical reflection among students.

- Utilize external reference tools that offer precise insights into students' performance in alignment with DELF standards.

Benefits for Grade 8 Students

Taking the DELF exam offers students multiple advantages, including:

- Measuring their language skills with an assessment tool distinct from traditional classroom evaluations.
- Challenging themselves and validating their French proficiency.
- Completing listening comprehension tasks rooted in real-life scenarios.
- Altering their attitudes towards FSL learning by emphasizing action-oriented tasks.
- Experiencing the joy of conversing in French with individuals outside their immediate classroom environment.

Discussions with the administration and the French Department

Steps prior to project implementation

Our project was initiated by the school board's French department, which already conducts DELF B1-B2 exams at the secondary level. This year, it was extended to include Grade 8 students. The initial steps involved training examiners to ensure sufficient evaluators were available, followed by inviting all Grade 8 French teachers to participate. Interested teachers then discussed the project with school administrators.

Meeting with the French Department

During the meeting, the French department and project organizers outlined the following steps:

- Setting exam dates.
- Drafting an information letter for parents explaining the exam's significance and logistics.
- Selecting appropriate exams for each program level:
 - A1 for Core French.
 - A2 for Intensive French.
 - B1 for French Immersion.
- Preparing group and individual exam materials

- Assigning examiners to participating schools.
- Submitting the information letter to the Resource Superintendent for approval.
- At this meeting, the French department assigned two examiners to each participating school and announced the test dates.

Information for parents

It is crucial to inform parents about the DELF exam, as participation is optional. Instead of holding a meeting, an explanatory letter was distributed, detailing the purpose of DELF, the test date, and encouraging participation. This letter was submitted to the Resource Superintendent for approval. A copy of the letter is included in the appendix.

Exam selection and alignment of Ontario's FSL program with the CEFR and DELF

For teenagers, we use the DELF Junior test. The selection of test level (A1, A2, B1, B2) depends on the teachers' knowledge of their students. For this pilot project, we have decided to use:

- A1 for the Core French program.
- A2 for the Intensive French program.
- B1 for the Immersion program.

These selections align with DELF descriptors. Additional resources to help determine appropriate levels for students can be found at:

- <https://www.ocdsb.ca/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=2594803>
- https://www.delf-dalf.ambafrance-ca.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/encadrer_et_evaluer_le_fls.pdf

Examiners, test rooms and equipment

French teachers, in coordination with their school principals, are responsible for preparing exam rooms. Desks should be arranged for group tests, and oral exams can be conducted in the same or a different room. Two examiners oversee the oral tests, while the French teacher supervises the written tests. Students are required to bring their own stationery supplies (pencils, erasers, pens).

School logistics before the exam

Prior to the exam day, it is essential to brief the school administration and eighth-grade teachers on the logistics of the exam. To avoid disruptions, principals should make any necessary announcements only after tests are completed. A schedule with student names and oral test times should be distributed to examiners and teachers ensure smooth transitions.

School logistics on exam day

Exam Day Procedures:

- Rooms should be prepared for testing.
- The French teacher welcomes the examiners and resource teacher.
- The resource teacher brings the exam materials.
- Students leave their backpacks and cell phones in their classrooms and bring only their pencils or pens.
- Group tests begin at the scheduled time.
- The French teacher distributes exams and drafts and plays audio for listening comprehension.
- The French teacher supervises the reading and writing tests.
- After completing their tests, students return to class.
- The French teacher collects completed tests and drafts and hands them to the resource teacher.
- Oral tests commence at the designated time.
- Students are guided to the oral test room at their scheduled time.
- Resource teachers provide instructions outside the oral test room.
- Following the oral tests, examiners standardize their assessment criteria.
- The resource teacher submits the completed tests and drafts to the School Board.

Correction day logistics

On the designated correction day, graders, resource teachers, and participating French teachers convene to assess the group tests. To maintain impartiality, teachers do not grade their own students' exams. Results are entered into a digital questionnaire ([Google Form](#)) to facilitate data collection and reflection.

Eighth graders' perceptions of DELF

A survey was conducted post-exam to gauge students' opinions on the DELF experience. The survey included 27 students enrolled in the Core French program.

Survey highlights

- **Exam Difficulty:** 56% of students found the A1 DELF exam fairly easy, while 30% found it easy (Figure 1).
- **Effectiveness:** 88.9% of respondents perceived DELF as an effective tool for measuring language proficiency, with the same percentage recommending it to other students (Figure 5).
- **Impact on Learning:** 25.9% of students reported a positive impact on their attitude towards learning French, while 55.6% were uncertain (Figure 3).
- **Task Difficulty:** Oral production and listening comprehension were seen as the most challenging components by 51.8% of participants, while 37% found written production most difficult (Figure 8). Conversely, 48.1% found reading comprehension the easiest (Figure 7).

Summary of DELF Task Difficulty Levels

Tasks	Very difficult	Very easy
Oral production	25,9 %	18,5 %
Listening comprehension	25,9 %	14,8 %
Reading comprehension	11,2 %	48,1 %
Written production	37 %	18,5 %
All tasks	7,4 %	

Figure 1

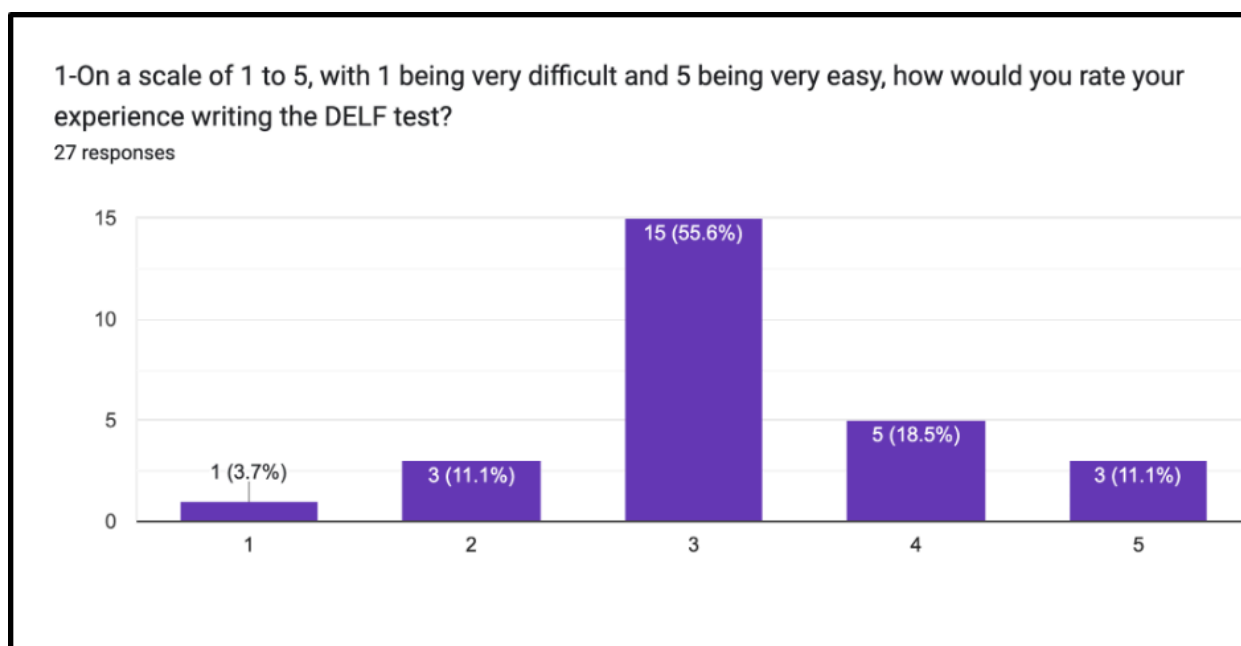


Figure 2

2- How confident are you in making a simple conversation with a francophone after taking the DELF test?

27 responses

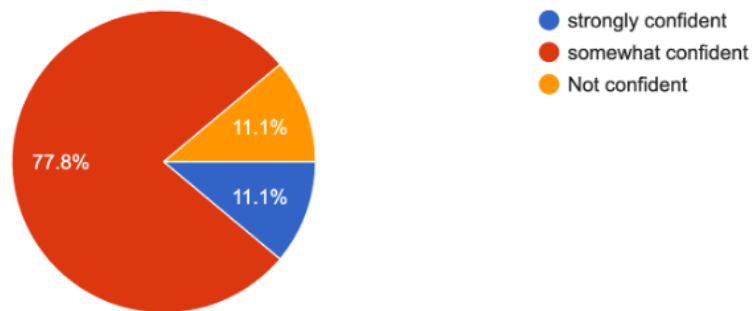


Figure 3

3- Does this experience make you more interested in continuing to study French in high school and at university?

27 responses

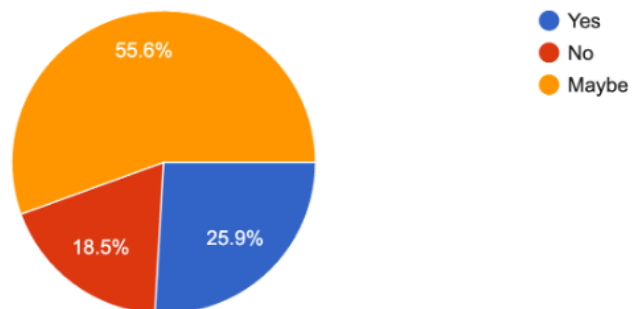


Figure 4

4- On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 not likely and 10 very likely, how likely are you going to take the DELF exam in the futur?

27 responses

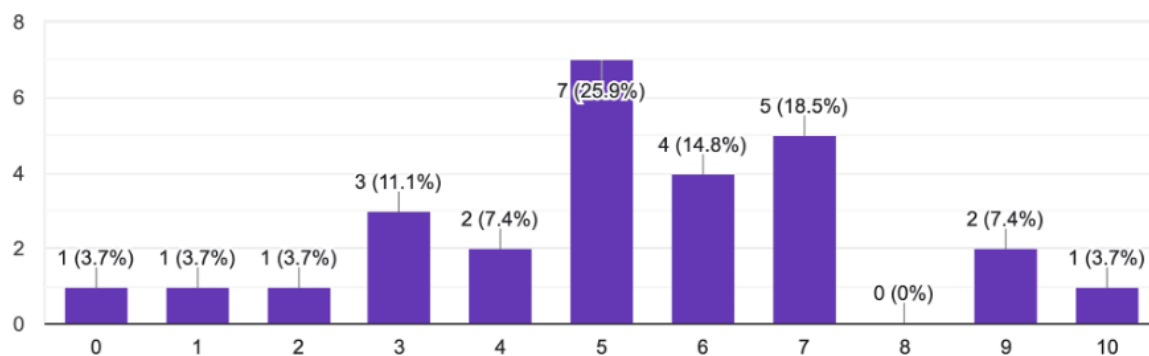


Figure 5

5- Would you recommend the DELF test to other students ?

27 responses

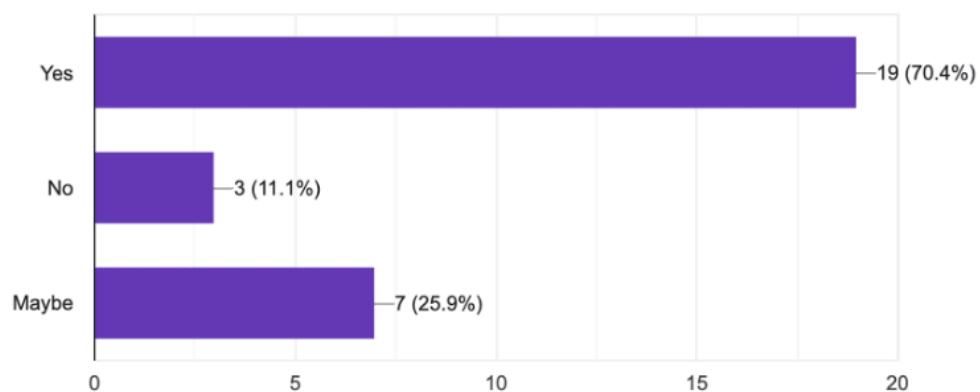


Figure 6

6-Do you think that the DELF test is a good tool for measuring your French skills ?

27 responses

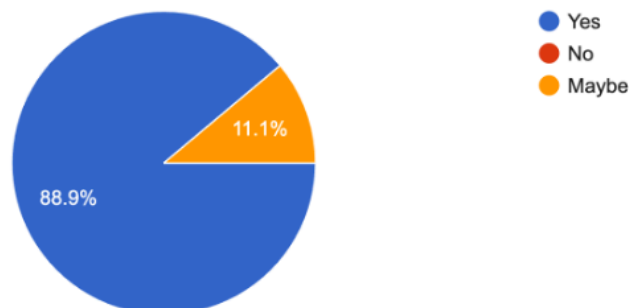


Figure 7

7-Which part of the DELF test did you find the easiest?

27 responses

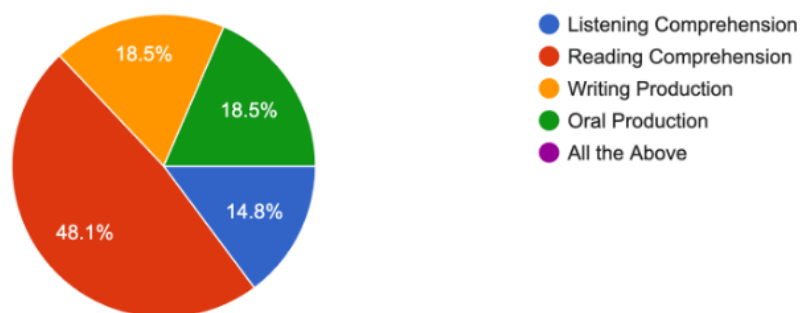
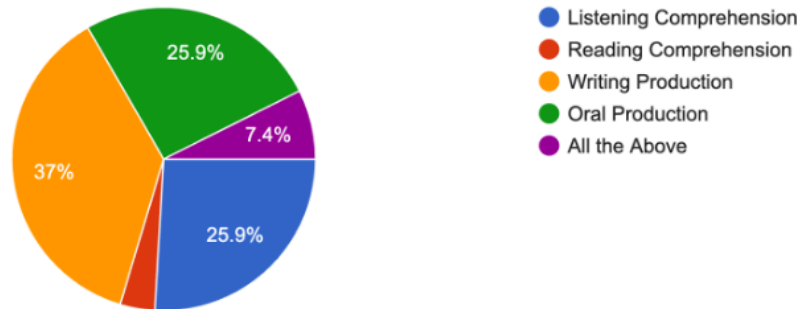


Figure 8

8-Which part of the DELF test did you find the hardest?

27 responses



Celebration and certificate of participation

At the end of this experience, it's imperative to recognize the efforts made by the students by organizing an appropriate celebration. Such recognition could take the form of a convivial party, where dishes popular with the youngsters, such as ice cream, pizza or other delicacies, would be served. At the same time, certificates of participation would be solemnly presented to each student, underlining not only their commitment, but also their constant efforts throughout the project. This dual recognition - both festive and formal - emphasizes the value of their participation and perseverance, helping to encourage and motivate students on their learning journey.

Reflections from the Authors

The idea of assessing our students' language skills is both exciting and challenging for us as teachers. Using external examiners to administer a language proficiency test, independent of the curriculum followed by the students, is a profoundly enriching experience. It offers a new and refreshing perspective on our teaching practice.

For students, DELF represents a valuable certification of their achievements, mastery and even weaknesses. This evaluation process provides them with a clear and objective view of their efforts and progress in their second language. The results of the survey, in which 88.9% of students perceived DELF as an accurate tool for measuring their French skills (figure 6), and 70.4% encouraged other learners to take the exam (figure 5), testify to the positive impact of this exam on their perception of learning.

For us teachers, DELF is an incentive to reconsider and refine our teaching approach. From now on, our teaching will be guided by a central question: how will our students use what we teach them in real-life contexts? This reflection leads us to adopt a backward planning approach, orienting our exercises and classroom activities towards practical, concrete applications. For example, if the theme of our unit is food, action tasks might include ordering at a restaurant, shopping, discussing healthy products, or conducting an interview with a dietician. These practical activities will become the common thread running through our planning.

What's more, this experience has enabled us to grasp the importance of incorporating action tasks right from the start of learning French. DELF has helped us understand that integrating such tasks into our teaching not only enriches the students' learning experience, but also enables them to develop language skills that can be applied in real-life situations. In short, this approach represents an enrichment both for our students and for ourselves, as educators dedicated to their success.

Appendix 1 - Letter to parents

Date

Dear Parents,

I hope this letter finds you well.

We are pleased to inform you about an exciting opportunity offered to our French Grade 8 students through the French Department of the **Board name**. At both the board and school level, we strive to improve the quality of education we provide to our students. Our commitment to enhancing the quality of French education has led us to participate in the **school year** pilot project for Grade 8 students involving the administration of the DELF (Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française) exam.

DELF is an internationally recognized language proficiency exam for non-native French speakers. The insights gained from this assessment will significantly enhance our understanding of our students' language skills, allowing for improved instructional strategies and a more personalized approach to language learning. Moreover, the collective data from this pilot will inform future French as a Second Language (FSL) programming and professional development opportunities at both the school and board levels.

For more information on DELF, please visit: <https://destinationdelf.ca/parent-portal/>

The results of the DELF test will be used to help our FSL teachers better understand the strengths and weaknesses of our students in French language acquisition. This, in turn, will enable them to tailor their teaching methods and strategies more effectively to meet the needs of individual students. Additionally, the insights gained from this pilot project will help inform Grade 9 programming, ensuring a smoother transition to high school French language learning.

Participation in this pilot project is optional but highly encouraged, as it represents a valuable learning experience. Students will receive a certificate of participation and a detailed breakdown of their results, which will not impact their final report card, high school course selections, or future French programming. If you have any questions regarding the DELF test or this pilot project, please do not hesitate to contact me.

The DELF test will take place at **School name** on **date** at **time**.

Sincerely,

Teacher's name French Teacher, OCT **teacher's** e-mail

Principal's name Principal **Principal's** e-mail

Resource Teacher's name FSL Resource, **Board** **Resource Teacher's** e-mail

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