

# FRANCOPHONE PRINCIPALS: WHAT UNIQUE CHALLENGES DO THEY FACE?

Francophone principals in linguistic minority schools encounter unique challenges because of the cultural and linguistic significance of francophone public school systems to their communities. Although francophone principals in Ontario report high job satisfaction (79.2%), there is an urgent need to promote a highly qualified teacher workforce, enhance cultural and linguistic security, and create safe workplaces.

## HERE ARE 4 CHALLENGES FACED BY FRANCOPHONE PRINCIPALS:

### 1. SUBSTITUTE TEACHER SHORTAGE

- Francophone principals report often or always (88.3%) having difficulty finding qualified French-language substitute teachers. This also means that teacher absenteeism is a significant challenge, with principals having to fill-in for classes.

### 2. PRESSURE FROM PAL



- 54.9% of francophone principals report that their work often or always reflects the direction of Ontario's Aménagement Linguistique Policy (PAL), which aims to improve how francophone language and culture are being lived out by young people.
- While essential, francophone principals find that this policy creates pressure to recruit and retain francophone students, including additional tasks (that English-language schools don't have), coupled with not enough time or resources to implement it.

### 3. WORK SAFETY



- Francophone principals report being harassed (e.g. verbally, psychologically) by various stakeholders including parents or guardians, students, teachers, senior officials, other school staff, substitute teachers, other principals, vice-principals, and trustees.
- Principals indicate that if they were harassed, it would most likely be by a parent or guardian (60.1%), and if physically assaulted it would most likely be by a student (34.6%).

### 4. EMOTIONALLY DRAINING SITUATIONS



- Francophone principals report spending more time on student well-being than any other activity (e.g. staff well-being, French-language services, professional learning). Student mental health, discipline, and cyberbullying often or always place principals in emotionally draining situations.
- Francophone principals also report spending more time working with parents than other activities (e.g. attending to staff, managing student discipline, participating in student activities).

**Professional associations, school districts, and policymakers can play a powerful role in addressing the challenges faced by francophone principals.** To ease recruitment pressures on principals, professional associations can work more closely with regulatory bodies and initial teacher education programs to increase the number of qualified French-language teachers. School districts can also lead continued professional support on the PAL that better recognizes the importance of principals in implementation. To address harassment and assault, the education sector can work more intentionally to promote principals' health and safety. **Above all, acknowledging the unique challenges of francophone school leaders can allow them to lead more effectively as key drivers of language and culture.**

For online resources and references, please visit: [edcan.ca/wellatwork](https://edcan.ca/wellatwork)

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