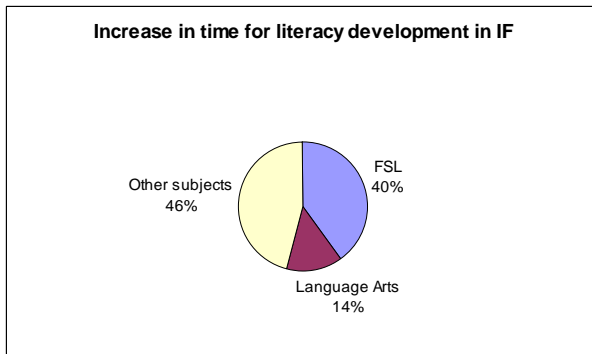
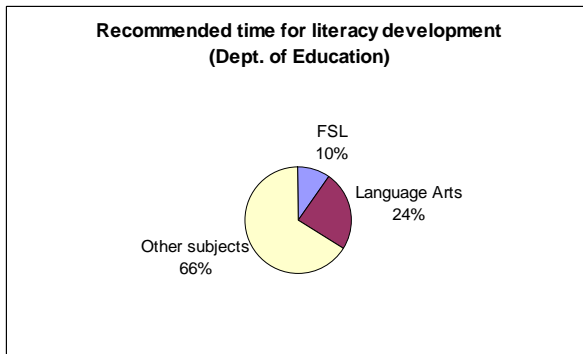


## Lower performing students

In general, lower performing students profit from participating in an intensive French (IF) program. There are no negative effects on the students' performance in English language arts and in some cases performance in English language arts improves. There are four possible explanations for these results.

1. *Time factor.* More time devoted to language arts. In the IF program, with the time devoted to IF plus the time in English, students have overall 20% more time for language literacy development. This may be seen in the Table below or in the 2 graphs (from NL):

<b>Percentage of time devoted to the development of literacy skills</b>					
	Intensive semester (%)	Non-intensive semester (%)	Year average (%)	Year average recommended by Dept. of Education (%)	% increase
FSL	72	7	40	10	+30
English	-	28	14	24	-10
FSL + English	72	35	54	34	+20



For lower performing students, the increase in time devoted to literacy development is very important as often lower performing students need more time to reach levels of language development similar to those of other students. This is why it is important to give sufficient time to IF (ex.: 72% of the school day, as in the example given above, or 80%). The more time given to IF, the more lower performing students will be able to improve their language literacy development.

However, the percentage of time is not the only factor as is indicated by the reasons given below.

2. *“Second chance” hypothesis.* In IF, students are taught to read and to write in French. For lower performing students, this procedure gives them the opportunity to learn to read and write a second time. In doing this, they are often able to learn strategies more effectively than they did the first time.

It is important to realize that when students learn to read and write in French, it gives them a new experience. They are not doing the same thing that they have been doing for years that has been associated for them with lack of success.

3. *Psychological factors.* In IF, lower performing students are not so different from the other students in the classrooms. They are all beginners in learning French. As a result, lower performing students are not perceived by the others in the class or themselves as being less able to succeed.

This situation creates a more positive learning situation for the lower performing students and also assist them to develop a higher level of self-esteem or self-confidence which, in turn, enables them to learn more effectively.

4. *Interactive teaching strategies.* In IF, the use of group work and cooperative learning is encouraged. The use of these types of strategies is helpful to the lower performing students. They are not as isolated in their learning as they are part of a group. Other group members take a certain responsibility for helping them to learn. Also, often the explanations or assistance of peers is more effective than that of the teacher.

These are some of the reasons why lower performing students can be included in IF and succeed not only in learning French but also in improving their performance in English and their attitude towards school.

Dr. Joan Netten, Memorial University of Newfoundland (NL)  
Dr. Claude Germain, Université du Québec à Montréal (QC)