



Hastings and Prince Edward  
District School Board

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## **New approach has French teachers A-I-M-ing higher**

Learning core French will take on an entirely new look for students this year—literally! They will learn to communicate through a stimulating new method known as AIM or Accelerative Integrated Method. Using the AIM approach, teachers present new vocabulary with gestures similar to sign language. Students repeat the words while gesturing, making vocabulary easier to understand, remember and use.

The AIM technique was developed over a period of 10 years by Wendy Maxwell, a 1999 recipient of the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence. Maxwell, who currently teaches in Vancouver and formerly taught in Toronto, became frustrated with core French programs and set out to create a more effective curriculum.

"This is a program that appeals to a variety of learning styles. Students are moving and producing French from the very beginning of their studies, says Sharon Richardson, Curriculum Coordinator for French and English as a Second Language. "This year, 13 schools in our board will be piloting Maxwell's Histoires en action program which is based on the AIM approach. Other schools are experimenting with her plays and songs. This promises to be a very exciting year for French in our board."

In late August, 27 French teachers from the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board received hands-on training themselves. They attended a French Summer Institute that involved learning and practising gestures, story retelling, and using AIM with students in Grade 4 and up.

All students in Grades 4 to 9 take core French unless they are enrolled in French Immersion. The AIM pilot program, although still based on the Ontario Curriculum, appeals to students through a stimulating mix of drama, music and movement.

"Teachers are energized by this new program and excited by the possibilities it offers to students," remarks Richardson.

The Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board has 46 elementary and eight secondary schools serving 18,700 students, employing 1,067 teachers and 775 support staff. The Board covers a wide geographical area of 7,221 square kilometres bordered by Maynooth to the north, Deseronto to the east, Prince Edward County to the south, and Quinte West to the west.

For more information, contact:

- Sharon Richardson, Curriculum Coordinator, ext. 2307, (613) 966-1170, or 1 800 267-4350

