

Frequently Asked Questions



When correcting written work, how detailed should the corrections be? (E.g. should accents be corrected?)

There are three factors: the age of the students, length of time in the program and type of activity.

1. Type of activity

Cahier work – regardless of age, I correct for meaning (correct response and syntax) and spelling (I ensure that all words are written correctly in the response) for all cahier work. In all cahier exercises (with the exception of partial questions) the word is contained in the exercise itself and there is no reason that the students should not take the time to copy correctly. For partial questions, I teach students to search for the ‘missing’ words for their responses in the text or in other questions. The only exception to this may be modifications for a student with learning difficulties. This would be left to the discretion of the teacher.

Creative writing – for creative writing the following factors influence how much and what I correct:

- age of the students;
- length of time on the program.

If early primary students are able to write two to three pages of creative writing during the first year or two in the program, I am very happy! Some students use emergent writing even in their first language. This will be the same in French. For student work in grade two or three and up, in the first year, I will correct high-frequency vocabulary that is misspelled and will definitely correct errors of syntax or meaning. In the second year and up in the program, once I introduce language refinements, and as students have increased and repeated exposure to the language, I correct all errors. The nature of the program ensures that students naturally become better as they progress into the second and third years and beyond. A detailed explanation of the correction systems and how they change throughout *Histoires en action!* is in the teacher’s unit guides.

I have been using the approach for two months but have not been strict in the exclusive use of French with students, though I speak only in French. How is it best to make the change/transition?

Tomorrow, use the entry routine and begin as if the program were starting. Praise the students who are using French with lots of sincerity. Every time you hear English, you should act shocked. Whenever a student uses English, stop the class, have the whole class help the student who used English by telling him/her how to say what s/he said in French. You must be consistent even if you hear English ten times or more in one class period (it usually happens only in IPG work time, as you are leading the students through oral communication exclusively in French during teacher-led activities) then stop the class each time. Do not let even one occasion where English is spoken pass without dealing with it. And definitely ensure that you begin the system of *les cartes* to raise student awareness.



How do you ensure that work is proofread/marked during IPG work time? Do students all work at the same pace and if students get ahead, do you stop them until they are all caught up?

There are different systems suggested in *Histoires en action!* I like to work with the students to correct their work during IPG work time. I find that I get a very good sense of what they know and what they don't know by the types of assistance they need and when I correct in class, they get immediate feedback. Especially at the beginning of the program, this is very helpful in setting up the correction systems and a routine whereby they must correct errors, then you place a stamp or happy face on the front of the cahier when it is ready to be moved from the 'pas fini' to the 'fini' side of the pocket folder.

As students progress in the program, you may use the bin system, where you correct work either in class or after school. Students are responsible for making corrections in class until, once again, you place the sticker, stamp or happy face on the front of the cahier, indicating that it may now be placed in the 'pas fini' pocket. These systems are explained in detail in *Histoires en action!*

How does AIM differ from TPRS?

While they resemble each other in the sense that a kinesthetic response assists with the acquisition of vocabulary and the use of story is common and creative language are common in both, AIM is more systematic in the sense that specific stories containing a researched high-frequency vocabulary are used. Language patterns and regularization of certain grammatical structures accelerate acquisition through AIM. There are also activities that scaffold the ability for oral and written language manipulation in the AIM. There are many other differences as well.

What do you do when a student refuses to speak French?

I am assuming that you mean during spontaneous interactions. Due to the choral nature of the whole-class activities, the shy, weak and strong students' needs are met, as all may speak constantly, yet without being singled out, or being fearful of making an error. There are lots of models showing how to provide assistance. I have never had a student who has refused to use French by the end of unit one. Contrary to what one might believe, students with learning disabilities may thrive in this program, and on several occasions, my students with learning difficulties have been among the strongest in the class! I have heard this over and over from many teachers who use AIM. This is generally not why a student will refuse to speak. If I have a student who did not speak, I would try to determine why this might be. If this is during the initial stages of the program, silence may be common. In linguistics it is called the silent period; some people need a certain amount of time to listen before speaking. Is the student shy? Some time spent with you on an individual basis – even a few minutes every week – where you may praise the student for trying may help this student. Remember that sincere praise is absolutely essential for the student to become more confident, for you to connect with the student. Catch any moments where the student even comes close to beginning to communicate and make a point of saying how pleased you are – with a big smile! Showing the students that you care very much that they learn is so important. In *Histoires en action!* you are provided with the tools to make students with all learning styles successful.



Do you have any advanced writing activities for students in grade five immersion?

The activities in Kits # 2 and # 3 contain activities that are very beneficial to help students refine their knowledge of grammatical concepts and develop creative thinking skills and improve their ability to write. However, if you have not begun the program with Kit #1, they will not know the gesture component.

If you use *Histoires en action!* exclusively starting in grade four, how many years will it take for them to reach critical fluency?

I have taught students from kindergarten to grade six in this program, and I have noticed that each student is very unique in his/her ability to learn and the speed at which critical fluency develops. I have had students develop critical fluency in the first year – some have been very high academic students, and last year it was a student who had learning difficulties! Some students progress at a slower rate. If you ensure that as you use the activity templates, provided in the program, you also provide plenty of opportunities for spontaneous interactions, humour and creative language use in a classroom setting where children feel supported and comfortable, then it is rare that a student does not reach critical fluency by year two, especially if the program begins in grade four or up.

I have *Histoires en action!* 1 - where do I find the raps?

The raps are found in Kits #2 and #3.



I need your recommendations for JK and SK – they have French for 30 minutes weekly.

This is not very much time, so using gestures would be the best way to really help any student with such little exposure to the language actually to be able to retain some vocabulary. I see the JK/SK years as preparation for the full AIM/*Histoires en action!* program. It is an opportunity to help them understand what it is to learn a play, to acquire vocabulary through the Gesture Approach and to begin to learn how to manipulate language and learn to question and respond to questions. Teach them vocabulary with gestures, do songs and some of the easy plays such as *La petite poule rouge*, *La poule Maboule* or *Petit Poussin*, found in the supplementary play books. We will be producing a book of plays for the early beginner soon, with accompanying language manipulation activities and questions.

What do students do when they move from an elementary program that uses *Histoires en action!* to grades seven and eight? Will they be at a disadvantage if the program focuses on verb conjugations?

Learning to conjugate verbs is very easy once one already speaks the language. However, learning to conjugate verbs without then being able to use those verbs because no fluency has developed has shown to be of little use. If you feel that, in the year following your implementation of *Histoires en action!* (whether this is the first, second, third or fourth year of *Histoires en action!*) then do some verb conjugations with the students so that they are aware of what they look like! It is only fair to the students. In Kit #3 of *Histoires en action!* students are taught what it is like to conjugate a verb; luckily, by then they will already be quite fluent, if you have correctly implemented the program!

***Do you think all French classes in one school should be doing the AIM program?
At our school, one class does not do it.***

Personally, of course I think that consistency and fluency-building by sequencing and scaffolding knowledge is the best way to approach the teaching of any subject. However, no one can force a teacher to do anything that s/he feels s/he does not wish to do. The Ontario Ministry guidelines state that a teacher has the right to choose what s/he feels are the most appropriate teaching/learning resources for his/her students. Hopefully each teacher does indeed make his/her decisions with respect to selection of classroom materials based on this!

How long does it take to feel comfortable enough to be in front of a class to teach the program?

This depends on each individual teacher. Some of the most successful teachers in this program began their first day nervously sitting at the back of the classroom as they watched the DVD of the gestures with their students. In most cases, it does not take long – your students will show you how quickly they can learn with this program and you will soon see how great that feels. Parents often will be telling you how, for the first time their children are using French at home and how happy they are in your class. The confidence-building will come as you use the program. Once you start unit two, both you and your students will be well on your way to being experts!

What if I have taught a gesture ‘incorrectly’ and have noticed that it should be another instead. Should I re-teach it?

It depends on whether you use the teacher or student DVD as part of your classroom or at-home review. If you do use it, then I would recommend simply joking with the students that you made a petite faute and that this is the real gesture. Maybe they can vote to decide which they like better! Then you should probably say that because it is on the DVD, you should really all use the one that the class will need to remember on the DVD. If you don't use it, then decide which one you want to use and then stay with that one! Keep in mind, however, that you will have to let the teacher who has the students in the following year know that you have one or more words that are part of your patois! The gestures are just a tool – a technique as long as they mean something and are as natural or iconic as possible – that's what is important!



Serious or recurring discipline issues are hard to deal with in French.

Do you have suggestions?

Deal with them in French only. There should be no reason for using English. Even very young, pre-verbal children understand facial expressions, tone of voice, even if they don't understand words. You are lucky that your students are older and even more aware of those non-verbal cues. Even in the first few weeks you will have taught them words such as *Arrête! Ne fais pas ça! Je n'aime pas ça! Viens ici! Ne frappe pas! Assieds-toi.* They will understand all this and they will certainly understand that you do not approve of the behaviour. Even in their own language, discipline issues are best dealt with in simple, straightforward ways with very little long-winded explanations that only seem to get everyone more upset. The best approach is to be firm, consistent and very caring, providing lots of praise for positive behaviour.

For supply teachers who do not know this program, do we need to have emergency lessons that stray away from the program?

There is no need at all to stray away from the program. Students internalize every aspect of the program so well that eventually, you will find that the program runs well on its own, without you there for a day or two! In the *Histoires en action!* program you are provided with many resources that model how to use the program for you. These resources may be used by an inexperienced teacher to continue with the program. The students know the entry routine – they can often do that on their own even in the second week! A strong student may be named who may take the leadership role of taking them through the entry routine. The teacher-led activity may consist of a couple of strong students leading the class in the oral reciting of the play, the teacher reading through the play with the Big Book or the overheads. A gesture review may be conducted where the teacher asks the class to do a kinesthetic review – the teacher doesn't need to know the gestures – s/he simply says the words and the students do the gestures for him/her. The video/DVD may be shown to either practise the gestures, watch the play or rehearse the dance. The teacher may ask questions based on the play (without gesturing) and the students respond chorally. The teacher may write questions or any of the language manipulation activities on the board or on overhead and do them orally and in writing. The students, especially if at the end of unit one or beyond, will know exactly what to do!

The daily lesson template ensures that students internalize the flow of the program and each day is predictable and similar in structure.

With respect to IPG work, the students know exactly where they are and how to move from one cahier to another, because of the system that are set up to ensure a sense of security, predictability and confidence among students in *Histoires en action!*

No new material may be introduced, but due to the repetitive nature of the program, you would possibly have done these reviews on that day in any case. One of the major complaints of my students is that the supply teacher spoke in English to them!



When a child arrives from another school without the AIM program, does s/he have trouble adjusting?

Depending on the child, I have had students who come in and very soon have surpassed the other students. I generally provide an extra-help class during the first term to boost the skills of the new students, especially if they enter in year two and up. This also allows me to connect personally with these students. I highly recommend that students review the gestures introduced to date on the DVD, so that they feel comfortable with them when you contextualize these gestures and bring more meaning to them for the students in class.

I teach in a half-day immersion class (Extended French) how can I implement AIM when teaching Science, SES, Drama and Music?

AIM is drama- and music-based, so many immersion teachers (including myself) have used this as the drama/music/dance component of an immersion program. You may apply some of the techniques and strategies to enhance and accelerate learning as well as to provide consistency of presentation across subjects. A story-based approach with total and partial questions may be designed to teach other subject areas and the gestures may be used to enhance comprehension and production of the language in any subject!

Nouns are much more difficult to teach – suggestions please!

I would disagree that nouns are more difficult to teach or to acquire. Nouns are concrete and visual, and the gestures for nouns are as well. In *Histoires en action!* nouns are very effectively acquired by association with a verb, such as *fait* (*fait ... le travail, une activité, quelque chose, une faute, une soupe, une pizza, une salade, un sandwich, un biscuit, un gâteau, le déjeuner, une maison, un livre, une marionnette, une danse, une histoire, attention, un cercle*). Using this technique in the program allows students to develop an awareness of words that appear often together so that they have them 'at the tip of the tongue' whenever needed in spontaneous interactions.



Grades seven and eight are a very particular group. They sometimes think that it's not 'cool' to do all the gestures. Does this method work with them? Does it have to be modified?

While it is true that this may be a very challenging age, they are still young people who need to feel that the teacher cares and that they are learning something. One of the things that has made the teaching of core French difficult to students of this age is that they have often taken French for four years or more and still cannot read, write or speak effectively in the language! I would not want to go to a subject in which I felt that I had learned nothing over four years, either! This is the advantage of the AIM – it creates fluency. One of the comments that is most often heard from older students is “ Thanks for doing this – it's the first time I have learned anything in (number) years! or “ I have learned more in the last month than I have in the last (number) years!” According to the teachers who have been successful with *Histoires en action!* with the older students, a few things are imperative. Preface the use of the program with an explanation of the following (in English):

1. how it works and why. Provide academic research (in simple enough terms so that they understand);
2. your belief in the program – if you don't believe, the students won't either;
3. your excitement about how much they will learn this year! Older students who are committed to the program may learn at an incredible rate if they apply themselves. Tell them that the strategies and techniques have proven to teach students to learn French;
4. showing them that other people use *Histoires en action!* – the *Enjeux* program may help them become aware of this! Have them notice how the students in the 'regular' French after six years in that program did not speak French, yet students as young as six years old, after one year could comprehend and communicate in French. If those young students can do it, then your older students definitely can do it – and even better!!
5. Don't be afraid to acknowledge openly their lack of success so far – let them know that you are aware that they have taken French for (number) years, and yet have probably not spent one full class exclusively in French!
6. telling them that from now on, you will not use English and they will not either – ever! in this classroom. tell them how ridiculous it actually sounds to use English to teach French! – a teacher who teaches French/students who learn French by speaking in English. Is that how they learned English? By speaking in another language??
7. telling them that not only are they going to learn more, but that they are going to have fun. You will expect a lot of focus and participation from them. You expect them to work as hard as you will be working because you care very much that they learn to speak French!!

Once the program begins, be very, very strict and consistent about the exclusive use of French.



How do you integrate students with physical disabilities into the class?

This depends on the physical disability. I had a legally blind student follow the class on a screen that enlarged my gestures while I wore black gloves to enhance her vision as well. If students only have one hand, then they use just that hand.

This method can teach you every single word within the program. French exists beyond the program. How does the method help with more conceptual vocabulary and with the multitude of possible combinations and constructions in the language? What if we want to use other materials?

The PDL is high-frequency vocabulary. Unlike any other French program before, the selection of vocabulary in this program has been designed to ensure that students learn to communicate effectively in another language – to develop a certain fluency in that language and to be able to express desires, needs, options, whether they are in the classroom, outside in the playground or in another country where French is spoken, etc. The program and its techniques exist solely to ensure that students learn to be effective communicators in French, so that students learn to appreciate and experience a love of language learning, so that they can express themselves using this functional, high-frequency vocabulary in almost any situation – certainly not limited to the classroom or to this program!. They are taught such important strategies as circumlocution, so that if they have not yet acquired a certain context-specific word, they can make adaptations to their language in order to make themselves understood. They practise this on a daily basis as they use French exclusively in class to communicate about any thing they wish with peers or the teacher. You will find that as students progress in the program and the ability and desire for spontaneous communication increase, lower frequency or context-specific words not included in the PDL will naturally be introduced, as needed. But the important thing to keep in mind is that the students will now have a certain developed fluency or vocabulary base (as immersion students do) into which these new words may be added in a meaningful way. This is based on Krashen's notion of scaffolding, called comprehensible input + 1. Without the important 'critical' fluency that this program helps students to develop, it matters little what vocabulary, material or grammatical concepts you wish to introduce, because they students will not be able to apply them/put them to use!

Would it be acceptable to improvise on gestures if you forget them or students ask you for words that you do not teach them?

Invent gestures for a word that does not appear in the PDL, but that students wish to use, for example in a story extension. I never translate full sentences for the students – they know that this is unacceptable as that would be using English. This rarely occurs, due to the scaffolding of the activities; however individual words that are context-specific yet not included in the PDL may be given a gesture, created by you and/or your students! If you forget a gesture, and you want to be consistent because you use the DVD or the teacher next year uses the program, then just search for the gesture on the DVD-ROM, gestures database if you forget.



The Ministry Approved booklist for Ontario (The Trillium list) does not have *Histoires en action!* program listed, yet as a teacher I'm to choose how best to teach my students. How do I reconcile these facts?

According to the Ministry Guidelines, the role of the teacher is to ensure that you choose the resources that you feel, as an educated professional, best meet the learning needs of your students. The Trillium list is a list of recommended resources. You are not required to use the books on the Trillium List. As an aside, although we are not on the Trillium list yet, we hope to be in a few months.

I wondered if the students who do not gesture may be indicating that they have internalized the vocabulary and no longer need the gestures.

First of all, students in *Histoires en action!* are required to do very little gesturing. They are asked to gesture the word upon initial presentation, so that they feel, see and hear the word, thus embedding it in a multi-sensory way. Students also gesture during kinesthetic reviews, where the teacher sees how well they are able to make the word-meaning association by producing the gesture and saying the word. Apart from these two situations, children are not required to gesture. However, kinesthetic learners will often naturally gesture along with you even when they are not required to do so. I never prevent a student from gesturing, if s/he feels the desire to do so to support his/her learning, or to help improve focus. With the high level of repetition in a variety of contexts of words taught in this program during teacher-led activities, most students are able to embed vocabulary and then communicate spontaneously without gesturing at all – ever! The gestures are a tool to assist students in the acquisition of vocabulary and to help students learn to combine that vocabulary to create meaningful sentences with correct syntax and grammar. It is not easy to gesture while speaking! The cognitive demands to do both are such that most students only use gestures when communicating spontaneously on rare occasions, to help them recall a word that they can't remember, or to self-prompt on occasion with a gesture; this usually limited to the initial stages of fluency development

How do you plan out the term?

In *Histoires en action!*, daily lesson templates, calendar templates as well as a sequence of teacher-led activities and IPG activity descriptions are provided to help assist you with the planning of your terms. Once you have completed one unit and understand the flow of the program, you will find that the basic flow remains similar, with a slow shift from one unit to the next toward increased IPG work time, more creative work with the language (increased time spent on creative story telling activities and refinement of language skills). the most important shift that happens from one unit to the next is the increased opportunity for spontaneous interactions as students develop fluency. If you do not allow for this and continue to control the language output of your class as is necessary during the initial stages of the program before fluency develops, then your students will never attain the higher levels of communicative competency that are possible with this program.



I am in a francophone school board in southern Ontario. Can I buy the DVD with the gestures only? Can I buy the student DVD?

You may buy the DVD of the gestures, which provides you with an introduction to gestures (the vocabulary from unit one of *Histoires en action!*) You may not buy the student DVD, unless you buy *Histoires en action!*, as it should be used with the program and would not be easy to use without the guides and other support material.

How can I use this program or where would I start with very low functioning grade sevens and eights. Attitude and behaviour are also huge problems.

Start at the beginning. If the children are not yet fluent, then they must work through the very important initial stages of the program that lay the foundation for fluency-development and accelerate language learning through the initial stages so that they are able to do the more challenging activities later on. An analogy might be: even though I have an M.A. in education, as I do not know how to play piano, I would not be able to start piano at, say a grade five or six level piano class, I would have to begin at the beginning. I would probably move more quickly through the program because I am older, as will your students who are older, learning French as a second language in this program! If these are low-functioning (e.g. low academic students) then this program is just right for them! If we can teach average grade one students to communicate effectively in this program, then we can definitely teach low-functioning grade seven and eight students, even if they are functioning at the primary level academically. With respect to attitude and behaviour – their current attitude and behaviour may be due in part to the fact that they are frustrated because they have not been successful – I think they may be happy to finally be learning and as long as you are positive and believe in the program.

Are there worksheets to assess writing in the Histoires en action! program?

There are many scaffolded language manipulation activities in the student workbook from which you may assess student writing. Once you move to the creative writing component of the program, if you have over 100 students, you will receive hundreds of pages of written output from them each week. You will have to pick and choose how much you want (or are able) to correct. Of course, you may assess all pieces of work by reading through and making notes on the assessment sheets provided – correction of the work is left to your discretion – the only reason for you to spend hours correcting is if the students make the corrections and learn from them. This is discussed in *Histoires en action!*



How do you integrate this program into a French immersion class? Should I start with Kit #1 even if my students are in grade three French immersion?

Many teachers are beginning to use this in early immersion as the language/literacy/drama/music component of their program. If the students are in grade three immersion and have been in immersion since kindergarten, then they most likely know all of the words from the PDL. If you read through the vocabulary lists, you will know what your students know and do not yet know. All other components of *Histoires en action!* (a strong literacy focus, the scaffolding of language development, emphasis on language production and creative language use, the development of creative writing skills as well as the unique way the program supports the acquisition of grammatical concepts) are all techniques and strategies that are highly beneficial in any language-based approach, whether first or second language. Many of the techniques and strategies particularly relating to the literacy and drama component have been adapted from strategies proven effective in first language (English) classes, yet developed specifically for second language classrooms.

Does the program cover all of the Ministry expectations?

Histoires en action! exceeds Ontario Ministry expectations. Not only do we teach the students more than is expected. They learn more than is expected.

How are the students going to know whether you mean 'à' or 'au' in spontaneous interactions?

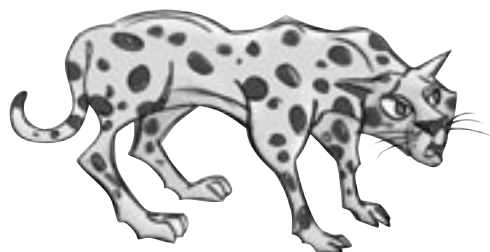
Just as first language learners know the difference, so do the language learners in this classroom learn to know the difference. With many repetitions in a variety of contexts, explicit teaching of the two forms and explanation of the differences with examples students awareness is raised and they very effectively not only are able to identify the difference, but are able to explain it as well.

Are there workshops that offer a more in-depth training with more practice?

The Summer Institute provides an intensive training in the AIM. It is a three and a half day training that includes a series of workshops at a variety of levels with several experienced teachers of the program presenting, allowing teachers to practise the program in depth, and according to their level of experience.

Have you/do you include any multicultural names in your plays/stories?

To date, I have included mostly French names so that students learn what some francophones are called. We always ensure that visible minorities are well represented in all our dances and plays on the DVD.



How and when do you teach the 'nous' and 'vous' forms of the verbs?

Nous and vous are introduced as objects early in the program. In order to provide consistency, predictability and regularization of the language for the students so that they gain early success with fluency and so that they speak with few errors when using verbs, the introduction of nous and vous as a subject is delayed in *Histoires en action!* until Kit #3. Once students have developed critical fluency and have an excellent understanding of how the language works, slipping these new forms into an already developed fluency is not only meaningful but fairly easy for most students. As with any new language form, they do need practice, so targeted gesture reviews ensure that students have repeated exposure to these forms. They not only need practise with the form itself, but also with application of the form in meaningful contexts. For that reason, the teacher is encouraged to use nous and vous, once introduced, in his/her TLSE on a regular basis and to encourage students to use vous when addressing the teacher (the polite form) or more than one person (the plural form). Students are presented with the irregular forms as well and these are practised in the same familiar format as all new words in the program: through targeted gesture reviews.

When you are teaching the passé, how do students come to realize that er verbs have é, ir verbs have i, re verbs have u endings? The kinds were doing this by rote, so it was difficult to see whether they actually knew which endings to use. How do they come to realize the regular verbs vs the irregular verbs for the past participle endings?

Verbs are taught through *Histoires en action!* in a very different way from the traditional deductive approach where the language is viewed as a science to be analyzed and verbs are divided onto groups according to their infinitive endings for the purposes of conjugation. Numerous studies have shown that a language learned in this manner unfortunately does not transfer to the ability to develop communicative competency, which is what we want our students to develop. I have taught students who were able to get 100% on tests, placing all correct verb endings in any tense, but who were unable to put a sentence together in French. Does a young francophone speaker of age four or five, who has a fairly developed vocabulary and who can communicate his needs, desires and requests to his parents know that the past participle of *er* verbs ends in *é*, that the past participle of *ir* verbs end in *i*, etc? It is not necessary to know this in order to be fluent in the language. This program takes students through the language learning process in much the same way a native speaker does. Students learn through an inductive approach whereby they learn the verbs by what sounds right, through repeated exposure and targeted practice. They are taught verb patterns by clustering the common forms, rather than by presentation of the verb as irregular or regular. Verbs of high frequency are targeted for practice more than verbs of low frequency, so that students know the forms they will use often well. Eventually, once students near the end of the program and have developed a good communicative competence, they are taught explicitly that there are verb groups, so that they are prepared for a program that does approach language teaching by analysis.



One of my grade seven parents has voiced a concern about my assessment of the gestures. Every other week, after much in-class practice, I quiz students on a section. On a piece of paper, the students spell the word I have gestured. There are 15 words and 30 marks. One mark if they can recognize the gesture (but it is misspelled) and two marks if the gesture is spelled correctly. The parent feels that I am testing the tool and not the language (which I guess I am); however, I tried to explain the big picture of doing it this way.

I would really only test if I were required by my school to do so. Personally, I do not believe in tests. Many students find it very stressful, and the parent is correct in saying that if the students can't remember all the gestures yet can speak the language, that's fine, of course! I did test my students for a while at one of my schools and found no difference in their ability to acquire vocabulary. If that is the case, then the time that it takes to administer the test is not a productive use of precious limited class time for the development of fluency. As teachers, our main goal is to ensure that students learn to be effective communicators, enjoy the class and love learning the language. If you feel that in any way the tests will have a negative impact on your students, then don't do them. These gesture tests were included with the program because some teachers have said that they are required by their schools to provide evidence of tests having been administered by them.

Why has the price of the Kit risen so quickly – from \$525 to \$725?

The initial price was an introductory price, primarily to help support teachers who had previously bought our supplementary materials, letting them enjoy a greatly reduced price for the first few months that the new program was out. This price only covered our costs of producing the kit. We then raised the price to the projected price that we had intended the kit to be. This intended price did not really reflect the actual costs to us of the product. It has been much more expensive to produce than we had imagined. Nevertheless, our product is 35% to 40% cheaper than the other basal core French program available for purchase by French teachers. It is very important to us to ensure that it be as affordable and accessible as possible to all teachers.



Which play(s) does one teach when a split class has already done two plays from *Histoires en action!* Kit #1 (a grade four/five split for example, with the grade five class having two plays under their belt and the grade four class with nothing at all)?

Ideally, for a combined entry level/year two experienced class, you should do units one and two, *Le chat et la lune* and *Boucles Violettes* from the parallel/add-on *Histoires en action!* 1 Kit B (to be released in January 2006). For the experienced students, the major content (the play, songs and dances and all the language manipulation activities, total and partial questions and creative story writing component) will be completely different, but because these units are equivalent to units one and two of Kit #1, you will ensure that you will teach the new students all the important high-frequency vocabulary. Don't worry that you will be 'teaching/reviewing' a lot of the same vocabulary as was introduced in units one and two with your current grade five class (with the exception of the context-specific vocabulary for *Le chat et la lune* and *Boucles Violettes*), because half the class will be new and must be introduced to the vocabulary and, due to the holoarchival design of the program, you would be reviewing all this vocabulary anyway for that experienced grade five group, had you moved on to *L'arbre ungali*. It takes a great deal of exposure in many contexts and active use of each word over time in order for it to be fully acquired. And in the first unit (*Les trois petits cochons* or its equivalent, *Le chat et la lune*), the largest amount of essential high-frequency vocabulary is introduced and should be repeated the most throughout the course of the nine units!

Once your grade five class moves into grade six, I would suggest skipping the optional unit three and fast tracking the students directly to *Louis la grenouille*, then on to *Chat Angora* in the second half of grade six. The grade five students of the split grade (even the weaker ones) can be given roles of responsibility for some of the gesture reviews, and question reviews with a partner who is from the beginner grade four class. This will boost the self-confidence of the experienced students, improve their fluency and will help solidify their commitment to the program. The experienced students will also be a great help in establishing your expectation of the new students with respect to the exclusive use of French and leading them, by their modelling, through all the systems and routines of the class that were established when they were in grade four.

There will be experienced speakers in the class among the grade five students who will immediately take on leadership roles and support you in the guidance and development of oral language skills of the new grade four students through spontaneous interactions with them. Some of the strong to average (not learning disabled) experienced grade five students may be expected to complete more *cahiers* than the grade four students (for example, they might be required to do not only all of the *Cahiers A* but also the *Cahiers B*), because they will naturally be able to work through them more quickly, having been exposed to the style of the work in the previous year as well as being familiar with the vocabulary. The experienced students should be expected to do both a story retelling and an extension for both plays, whereas the grade four students should be expected to do a retelling and extension for only the second play at the end of the year. You should expect that the grade fives will write with more spelling and grammatical accuracy, and write longer stories with greater detail.



Referring to the previous question, wouldn't the grade five class find a) the language repetitive even though they are doing a different play, and b) that they wouldn't progress as fast or far as a "straight" grade five class?

As mentioned above, due to the holoarchival nature of the program whereby each unit's vocabulary and structures, language manipulation activities, strategies and techniques are contained within the next, you will be repeating the vocabulary and all the activities whether you move into unit three or do the parallel/add-on plays. Some of the vocabulary in the parallel/add-on kit for units one and two will necessarily be different from units one and two of Kit #1 as, of course, will be the entire content of the play and song and dance as well as all the language manipulation activities, total and partial questions and creative story writing component. It is true that you will be formally "teaching" some of the vocabulary that the experienced students should know, but some of them may not yet have fully internalized it, and all students continue to need the repeated exposure for full acquisition; that is why we repeat this vocabulary through the nine units of *Histoires en action!*

What would the grade five students miss by not continuing to units three and four?
If you do the parallel add-on units one and two:

1. you will not be exposing the students to the longer, less repetitive play, *Louis la grenouille*, that they would have seen in the second term of the following year;
2. the additional gestured vocabulary targeted for teaching in units three and four (which is actually, for the most part, the same vocabulary because unit three is an optional unit to provide for more in-depth review of that vocabulary) would not appear on your list of vocabulary to teach;
3. some grammatical concepts would also not be included.

However, if you have Kit #2, you may wish to familiarize yourself with units three and four, and if you wish to introduce any of the gestures from unit three (or four, which is mostly the same vocabulary) or any of the grammatical concepts or other aspects of the program such as the entry routine rap, etc., you may do so by padding your sequence of teacher-led activities and introducing some of that vocabulary in additional gesture teaching activities, or some of the grammatical concepts during your whole-class cooperative story writing activities, if you feel your students are ready.

There is no detriment to fluency-building by spending more time taking the program more in depth and providing additional review for the students. It only serves to make them more confident, more fluent, and better prepared to meet the demands of the more challenging units that are to come. The great mistake that many teachers make, as David Booth once said, is that they pressure themselves to feel that in order to provide a good language/literacy program, they need to rush as fast as they can through the content, trying to cover as many stories as possible in a year. In fact, for learning to occur, the opposite is true.



***Would you recommend using 'Histoires en action!' in grade one core French?
If so, would you do one play a year? If not, what plays would you recommend?***

I would recommend doing *Les trois petits cochons* with grade one in core French under certain conditions:

1. if your class has had previous AIM experience in Kindergarten;
2. if your class has had no experience with AIM in Kindergarten, but has French at least 30 minutes per day, five days a week or equivalent.

If you have three 30 minute classes or less per week with your students, the play will take a long time for the students to learn and may not be the best way to use the program. As an alternative, you might wish to use two simple plays and their accompanying language manipulation activities and questions appropriate for very early primary students (Kindergarten and grade one) from a book that we will be releasing soon called *Fun French Plays for the Young Beginner*. You simply insert these plays into the sequence of teacher-led activities of unit one, *Histoires en action!* Until this book is released, you could use *La petite poule rouge* or *La poule Maboule* from the current volumes of plays available. Please keep in mind that it is more important to ensure solid learning than to “cover” more material, and this is true for any age, and especially true for students at the grade one level.

Whether you decide to use the plays from *Histoires en action!* or the early primary plays from the new book is left to your discretion. In either case, you will be introducing the same vocabulary from units one and two of *Histoires en action!* to your entry level grade one class as you would with a class who is using the plays from the kit.

Following the guidelines provided for you in *Histoires en action!* will help you to understand how the program works, and provide you with a certain sequence and flow of activities. You may use the gestures on the DVD, the posters and image cards for other vocabulary, the in-depth descriptions of how to conduct the teacher-led activities provided in the guide, and the very easy plays.

For grade one students, you may need to modify the teacher-led activities somewhat to ensure that you move through them at a pace that is age-appropriate, while providing the amount of repetition necessary. Young students generally need a slower pace and more repetition than older students. You will therefore need to “pad” the teacher-led activities with many more than are recommended in the guide, such as:

1. gesture/gesture association reviews;
2. play rehearsals (reading, with puppets, orally by memory);
3. questions (total and partial by gesturing) with choral responses from the students;
4. modelling of language manipulation activities;
5. song and dance rehearsals.



Even with your older students, you will need to “pad” the program, to ensure that you maximize their learning and meet their needs. With a grade one class, I would not recommend that you do the peer-evaluations or small-group rehearsals. Whether you do only the one unit, *Les trois petits cochons*, or the early primary plays with your grade one class, you could also supplement with more songs from popular recordings for children in FSL programs such as

Matt's Greatest Hits, for example, or any other songs. Use your knowledge of gestures and have the students gesture key words to the songs!

In most cases, especially at the beginning of the year, grade one core French students will need a great deal of support with the reading and writing component of the program. By the end of the year, if any students are reading and writing in English, then they should also be reading and writing in French in your program as well. Due to the scaffolding, extensive modelling with the whole class and numerous opportunities for writing provided in this program, strong writers in grade one core French have been able to produce incredible pieces of writing for their age and experience in the language. Students who still do not write by the end of the year will have benefited from that same high level of repetition, modelling and scaffolding and will be ready to complete these activities, once they do begin to write. There are strategies to support the non-writers (older, learning disabled or younger students) described in the teacher's unit guides of *Histoires en action!*

I would like to start the AIM with my grade seven (or eight or nine) core French class.

I think that 'Les trois petits cochons' would be too easy/babyish, etc. for them.

What do you suggest?

It is a common concern of teachers of older students that this story would not appeal to them. Don't assume right away that this is the case. The demands of learning a whole play of the length of *Les trois petits cochons* is challenging to any non-fluent student, regardless of age. The numerous writing exercises (two *cahiers* of each type, including up to 200 written questions in the first unit!) are certainly not too easy or babyish for someone who is not yet proficient in the language. In addition, the requirements for creative writing even at the early stages of the program probably far exceed anything that your students have encountered so far in their language-learning classes, even if they have had core French for several years. You may feel that your students will consider the story to be too juvenile for them, however please keep in mind that some teachers of grade seven and eight who have used this play, reported that they have had great success with that play, even with students in grade nine.

We must remember that for non-speakers of French, even those (or especially those!) who have had four or five years experience in French, learning another language can be quite intimidating (and after the fourth year with no success, may seem pointless!). Introducing this program with its unique strategies and techniques to non-speakers of French and beginning with a story that is familiar to them, may be just what it takes to help those nervous, self-conscious adolescents begin to relax, lowering their affective filter, allowing them to have fun and finally learn! Remember that as a teacher of a foreign language to students who are not yet fluent, you have all the linguistic power and they have none. They are like babies with no communicative ability and are totally dependent on you if they are to learn to communicate with each other exclusively in the second language, as you require of them from the time they enter your AIM classroom! Much of the success of this program with older students so far has to do with the way the teacher approaches his/her students. It really helps if you are relaxed, believe in the program, and ensure that you have fun with the students, regardless of the storyline of the play. Other suggestions from teachers who have started with unit one of *Histoires en action!* with students at grade six and above are:



1. Explain up front what it is all about, and provide the research from the program guide or our website to support the methodology.
2. Be excited to tell them that they will finally be successful in French!
3. Tell the students that even though they will have a lot of fun and will learn in a very different way, that you take this program seriously and are dedicated to their success. Inform them that you expect them to work each day as hard as you do to make sure it will happen!
4. Tell them that they will be graded on their active participation, in teacher-led work, IPG activities and in the fact that all spontaneous interactions French must be used! (*Les cartes* allows them to explicitly monitor this and to have input on these grades).
5. Inform them that knowing the gestures will help them to be successful in their fluency development and comprehension of French. It will also help them be more successful in the games. You may wish to test their knowledge for marks as well.
6. Tell students that cooperative learning is an important component of this program. They will be expected to work often in small groups or in partners where they will have to apply all the knowledge they gained in the teacher-led work in their spontaneous interactions with peers. It will be hard work, and cognitively demanding, but they will learn so much and will have a lot of fun if they apply themselves and work hard. They will also be able to produce some amazing written work that may be published.
7. They will learn much more than French alone. They will learn dramatic arts and public speaking skills, dance choreography, creative thinking skills through story writing, games, songs, grammar concepts that may help them with their understanding of English grammar, how to be a better writer and how to form questions and respond well to questions in complete thoughts. These skills transfer to their ability to write well in English.
8. They will be performers – actors and dancers!
9. You may explain that one of the purposes of learning *Les trois petits cochons* is that this play will appeal to younger students. If this is possible at your school they will present the play to younger students and those students would benefit from seeing in French a story that is familiar to them, in order for them to understand it more easily. Of course, this is the same reason that you would begin the program with *Les trois petits cochons* with any grade!

Finally, if you still believe that this particular play, *Les trois petits cochons*, would really not appeal to your students, you always have the option to use the unit one teacher's unit guide and insert the content and activities of the parallel/add-on kit's unit one, entitled *Le chat et la lune*. Because it is not such a famous story, the students will most likely not recognize it as one of those stories that they heard when they were very young. From that point on, all the stories in *Histoires en action!* should appeal to the older students. If you have strong students and ample class time, you may even be able to cover three units in a year, or work with two units more in depth and skip the optional unit three, thereby fast-tracking the older students directly to *Louis la grenouille* and *Chat Angora* in year two.



I would like to start *Histoires en action!* with my intermediate class but I am concerned about teaching grammar (verb conjugations, adjectives, etc.) and it all needs to be covered. How do I do that?

In Kit #2 and certainly in Kit #3 you will work with grammatical concepts in a very advanced (yet applied) manner, whereby students actually internalize the forms and the rules with repetition over time, using error analysis as a focus of the refinement of language skills. Therefore, if the program begins in grade four, by the intermediate grades you will be covering all the grammatical concepts that you need to cover in Kits #2 and #3 (and maybe more, including *le passé composé* and *l'imparfait*). You will not only cover the material, but if you teach the program well, your students will also effectively learn what you intend to teach! If you begin *Histoires en action!* unit one at the grade seven level and you either fast track the students (do units one and two, then four and five and possibly six), you will have covered many grammatical concepts through both an inductive as well as deductive manner.

If you would like your students to learn to analyze any aspect of grammar that is not included in the program, you may use the techniques and strategies provided to you in *Histoires en action!* to include these grammatical concepts in your error analysis activities, or in applied grammar work as you engage in whole-class modelling of creative story writing. Students at this age learn quickly, so you may insert a few teacher-led blocks with activities of the style that you feel you need to expose to your students, with little detriment to the overall effectiveness of the program. Such things as verb conjugations (proven in studies to be quite ineffective in the transfer to overall fluency development, either oral or written) may be introduced in class and given as rote work for homework. Understandably, it would be unfair to send your grade seven students into secondary school without having provided them with experience in the completion of activities such as verb conjugations that they will be expected to know how to do once they reach secondary school.

How do I evaluate, test, etc. for the junior/intermediate grades?

Assessment of gesture knowledge

On the CD-ROM that accompanies each kit, you will find the introduced words set out in a way that helps students recognize what words and associated gestures they know and do not know to date. These *chasse à la mémoire* type activities are simple and very quick to use with the students and therefore do not take up too much class time. They will provide you and your students with a tool to assess quantitatively their basic ability to recognize the words and their associated gestures taught so far. The process used with this activity also involves number and letter identification and therefore is another way that this vocabulary may be reviewed in a meaningful, authentic context. A full, detailed explanation of the auto-verification process is provided.

Assessment of basic language manipulation ability (written) and knowledge of content of this unit

Cahier B (which contains the same extensive selection of structured language manipulation activities in the same recognizable format as *Cahier A*) may be used as an assessment tool, if you wish to assess to what extent students can work completely independently within a limited period of time. This pressure may be difficult for some students and, as with all “performance-type” assessments, may not reflect their true level of ability. A far better way to assess overall

basic written language manipulation ability is to use the IPG work time to note and to document anecdotally each student's:

1. learning style;
2. level of and type of assistance required (if necessary);
3. ability to focus on and complete work independently;
4. level of accuracy.



This is done without the pressure of a time-limited assessment tool.

Assessment of general comprehension

General comprehension has been successfully assessed, using the same familiar format of a story followed by language manipulation activities and total and partial questions. Assessment kits for students at different years in the program may be found in supplementary resources called *Fun French Plays*, *Fun French Plays Activity Book*, and *Fun French Plays Supplementary Questions*. You provide the class with the sight passage, a story that contains the PDL but that they have not seen before, and evaluate each student's comprehension by providing a selection of language manipulation activities from the *Fun French Plays Activity Book* and a selection of total and partial questions from the *Fun French Plays Supplementary Questions* book. These resources will allow you to evaluate the students' ability to move beyond a story that is familiar to them and, upon first exposure to this new story, demonstrate their comprehension. You may view and purchase these resources at www.aimlanguagelearning.com.

Assessment of basic oral fluency development

Ongoing assessment of oral fluency in the classroom occurs as you guide the class through the teacher-led activities, both structured (gesture teaching/review, questions based on the play, Teacher-led Self Expression (TLSE), error analysis) and unstructured (story retelling, creative story writing, story extension, poetry/rap writing, and open-ended discussions of interest relevant to the students' lives). This assessment occurs naturally each day and if you establish a strong connection with your students, you will no doubt be quite aware of most students' general fluency levels. Spontaneous interactions during IPG work time also provide ample opportunities for you to observe and assess student fluency levels, particularly in units seven eight and nine, when the time you allot for IPG work greatly increases.

The best way to assess student oral fluency is to observe closely all interactions with you and other students as you circulate during IPG time, where students rehearse the play and interact spontaneously as they help each other with their work in the *cahiers*. If you wish to observe a specific assignment that will demonstrate levels of oral language manipulation ability, the best activity to target for this type of assessment would be the oral story retelling session in partners, once your students are capable of doing this activity. Each day, observe a few pairs over a period of 20 minutes. In doing so, you will get a clear idea of each student's ability to manipulate the language orally (confidence, speed of speech) and use of a wide variety of words. In addition to fluency in French, you may also assess each student's ability to retell a story effectively by paraphrasing and to embellish it during the oral story retelling activity.

Assessment of spontaneous overall fluency development

In Kit #3 of *Histoires en action!*, you will find a scaffolded test that assesses students' general communicative competence levels by the end of the program. You may use this at the end of the year as a final oral exam, if you wish.

At any time, you may use the creative improvisational storytelling component of the program as a way to test for creative language use, correct language use, and ability to sequence a story in French.

Assessment of grammar knowledge

In units eight and nine, some *cahier* activities such as *Choisis le bon mot* (focus on grammar exercise) and *Corrige les erreurs!* may be used for testing students' knowledge of grammar in grade six and above. These activities may be given to the students; once you feel that your students are cognitively ready, have reached a good level of fluency, and have received sufficient modelling of the process of error analysis. The *Corrige les erreurs!* activity also requires knowledge of the code system introduced in unit seven. If you wish further testing materials, you may develop more activities of this same style quickly and easily using the templates provided and basing them on the students' own errors found in their creative writing.

Assessment of written fluency

Once you have modelled the activity called *Les gens en action!* (Kit #3), you may use it to test written fluency in an open-ended, spontaneous context.

Do I teach 'Les trois petits cochons' to all of my classes? How do I justify to the older students (and parents) that they're doing the same play as the younger ones?

Many teachers who have used *Histoires en action!* have introduced *Les trois petits cochons* to all of their classes, from grades one to six or above. For your personal training as an AIM teacher, this is best, as you get ample practice with the techniques and strategies and will be intimately familiar with the first year of the program, and will be very prepared to move forward with your students to take them successfully into *Histoires en action!* Kit #2. It may be used at any grade level and it is holoarchical and sequential, repeating and building from one unit to the next. Just as when a student begins to learn the piano, s/he begins at grade one, and then moves on from there to grade two, three, four, etc., whether the student is six years old or 60 years old, the same premise holds for this program – whether a student is young or old, if s/he does not speak, read and write in French, and has no prior experience with the AIM, then s/he begins at the beginning. In our experience, older students learning through *Histoires en action!* learn more quickly and therefore we may expect them to complete more language manipulation exercises and write longer stories from the start. However, we must also be careful to ensure that the in-depth repetition that necessarily must occur with younger students, also happens to some degree with the older students as well, to ensure fluency development and confidence.

The methodology (AIM) and *Histoires en action!* have been used successfully with students from grades one to eight, and in some American and Australian high schools as well where French begins at grade nine. Some parents may wonder why you are doing the same program with students of different ages. The piano analogy may be used as explanation in part.



They may then wonder why their older child, after three years or more of French is at the same stage in their language learning as their younger sibling, with much fewer or no hours of FSL instruction. The blame does not rest on the shoulders of the teacher. Unfortunately, even the communicative FSL programs have not been entirely effective at promoting the development of solid oral and written communicative skills. We have to be honest with the parents. There are no studies documenting the fluency levels of core French students in Canada because until the introduction of the AIM (and Intensive French) there has been no fluency among core French students in general, even after years of study in FSL classes. You can explain that in *Histoires en action!* your expectations of the students at different grade levels will vary depending on their age, as follows:

1. Older students naturally learn more quickly, and grade seven and eight students should be able to complete up to three units, whereas students at the elementary level will complete a maximum of two.
2. The average grade seven and eight students will be expected to complete an extensive array of *cahiers* (*Cahier A* and *B series*), and much longer stories. They will take a leadership role in their learning and many of the activities that are teacher-led for the younger students may be student directed for the older ones.
3. The older the student, the more capable s/he is, on average, of writing creatively. Even in the first year of the program, you will expect older students to produce up to four pages of creative writing per story, whereas your demands of the grade three to four students may be two or three pages at first. Some strong grade seven student writers in English have been able to produce seven or more pages per story in the first year of French using *Histoires en action!* Grade one students may not be able to write at all, although strong writers at the early primary level can really exceed our expectations! That is one of the advantages of this program. It allows students at all ages and all stages of language learning, whether above-average, average or learning disabled to maximize their potential, due to the strong scaffolding and modelling of every aspect of the program.
4. Older students will be expected to use proper spelling from the beginning and apply all grammatical concepts introduced in their creative story writing, even in year one of the program. Early primary students, who are still sometimes at an emergent writing stage even in English, are not generally expected to do extensive corrections in their first or second story.

Therefore, even though you are working on the same play, the expectations and accomplishments of students at different grade levels will, in most cases, be very different.



Is Histoires en action! appropriate for French immersion?

Histoires en action! uses strategies and techniques that have proven effective in English language and literacy programs to develop higher order thinking skills, language and literacy skills, and dramatic arts skills. It also has the added advantage of containing effective strategies and techniques to accelerate the development of oral and written fluency particular to second language learning situation, which is what immersion teachers (unlike core French teachers) are expected to accomplish with their students! It is a very appropriate program for immersion students that will kick start their fluency development. It should be introduced at the grade one level, and may be used as the language and literacy component of the program. The teacher may target a certain time of the day, the length of an average core French class (30 or 40 minutes, or more), in which to use the program. The class may therefore progress through the units at approximately the same pace as core French students. The added benefit of the immersion situation, of course, is the amount of time allotted for French instruction. Immersion teachers may use the techniques and strategies found in ***Histoires en action!*** across their curriculum. These include:

1. the use of gestures for vocabulary acquisition;
2. TLSE to maximize production and practice of oral language skills of ALL students;
3. gestural mirroring to assist students with basic oral expression initially and then refinement or oral production later on;
4. the use of total and partial questions to ensure complete thought responses and to scaffold for comprehension;
5. the use of a story-based approach to provide a language-rich environment for learning.

These strategies and techniques may be applied throughout the day in French immersion classes, even in the Social Studies, Science or Math classes, thus making the French immersion experience more consistent, cohesive and accelerative overall. Once French immersion students move into grades two, three, four and up, they are expected to engage in more creative writing and language refinements. The content and strategies included in Kits #2 and #3 of ***Histoires en action!*** will help immersion students effectively learn grammatical concepts, develop higher order thinking, literacy, public speaking, and dramatic arts skills as they move into the later elementary years.

I need to give a written mark to my classes first term. How do I do this with 'Histoires en action!'?

This is really only the term where you may not have very much written output. In this program, once you are into unit two and beyond, the opposite is true: so much written work that you will need to be selective about what you correct, so that you are not overwhelmed!

If your first term ends in December, your students should have completed some of the IPG activities of unit one of ***Histoires en action!***, as long as you have the class every day for at least 30 minutes. You will have listened to them read in small groups, and can evaluate their ability to read those words in the play. You may base their written mark on whatever ***cahiers*** they have completed up to the point that you write the report.



For assessment purposes, during the first term and from then on, during the IPG work time when students work on their *cahiers*, it is important that you observe carefully each student's ability to complete each *cahier*, keeping in mind the following questions:

1. Does the student come for help always, often, sometimes, or never?
2. How well does s/he make an oral request for help?
3. How often does s/he come for help?
4. What type of support is needed? (e.g. Can s/he read the question, but not understand? Can s/he not yet read, but once you provide assistance with reading, now understand and be able to respond correctly?)
5. How well does the student complete each *cahier* with correct meaning, spelling, syntax and grammatical accuracy (copying at the early stages of the program)?
6. Does the student complete everything quickly and accurately with no assistance, and then offer help to others as a peer-tutor?

Part of your assessment of your student's written work should reflect the above considerations, and if your reports are anecdotal, you may be quite precise about exactly what each child is able to accomplish with respect to his/her written work. Once creative writing begins, corrections become more involved and recommendations for this are made in *Histoires en action!*

Some of my students cannot afford to buy a student DVD. How can I resolve this?

The student DVD is not a requirement of the program. For years, many teachers taught their students French very successfully through the AIM with no at-home support at all. The student DVD is highly recommended for students entering the program late, so that they may put in some extra time at home to learn the gestures and generally feel more at ease with what is happening in class. It certainly is a great support to the teacher if students do spend some time at home to practise with the DVD, but it is not required for the success of the program. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that learning happens during class time. Some schools who want their students to have the opportunity to use the DVD at home, but the students of which cannot afford to purchase a DVD individually, have done one of the following:

1. The teacher buys a class set of DVDs, as s/he would with any textbook, which is returned to the school once the students have completed the units. Some schools ask for a deposit, which is returned to the parents once the DVD is returned, in good condition, to the school.
2. The teacher or school library buys a few DVDs (not enough for the whole class). These are lent out on a rotational basis to the students, so that each has a turn to practise for part of the unit at home.
3. The parent association buys some DVDs for student use.



Many of my students are new Canadians. Can this program accommodate them?

This may be the only class in which the new Canadians (non-English speakers) are on a par with their English language peers! All are at the same point because none of them know French. In fact, ESL students are primed for language learning because they are currently working hard to learn English. They are in 'language-learning mode' and often do well in this program, because they know how important it is to try to communicate if one wants to become fluent and they learn to listen for regularities in the foreign language. They are sensitive to non-verbal cues and are not afraid to try, because they know first hand what foreign language learning is all about!

I do not have my own classroom. How do I do the entry routine/group points?

Many teachers using this program do not have their own classroom! The entry routine may happen as soon as you enter the room, as this will be the signal to the students to move from their seats to sit on the floor in front of you. One of the philosophies of this program is that not a second should be wasted that may potentially be a language learning time. Therefore, have the students begin to chant the entry routine as soon as you enter the room – these routines become well known and remain consistent every day. You will find that students will not even need reminders, eventually, to begin the routine as you enter – it just becomes part of what is done, and is wonderful way to prepare the class for that day's activities! Organizing the group point system is as simple as establishing a designated area on the board, or on a piece of chart paper, or construction paper (one colour for each group colour, if you wish) on which you write the points. The board/chart on which the points are written may either remain in the classroom, or be taken away with you each day on your teacher's cart. All routines such as these should be made quick and simple to use, for both students and teacher.

In my classroom/the classrooms where I teach, there is no room for the students to sit on a carpet. What do I do?

The purpose of having students sit in close proximity to you on the floor is so that you can remove all distractions (touching or looking at things on/in their desks) in order to ensure a high level of focus and participation, so that you may monitor the class effectively. The only time you need the students to sit on the floor is for the ten–maximum–20 minute period during which you conduct the teacher-led activities. The rest of the time is IPG work time and this is carried out at the desks and/or tables. The IPG time greatly increases as you move through the units, and therefore the teacher-led time and need for this carpet space will decrease. That being said, there will always be a need for you to maximize participation during the teacher-led time. The following are a couple of solutions that teachers have suggested at workshops:

- Have students go to a nearby room or other space where there is space available (multi-purpose room, workroom, even locker area or in the hallway) – sometimes a change in location alone will even increase focus!
- If there is just a small space, not enough for the whole class, but enough for some at the front of the class, have the students in the front seats remain there and the ones seated at the back come to the front and sit on the floor.



Some type of arrangement that ensures that some or all students are not sitting at desks for that teacher-led time is very important! Of course, we must work with what we have, so if the students must sit at desks, then try to position yourself and move around the room in such a way that draws attention to you and so that you do whatever you can to maximize participation and focus.

I'd love to do *Histoires en action!* but my consultant says that I cannot use it exclusively and that I must use the resources offered by the board. Any suggestions?

At AIM Language Learning, we have no authority to tell you what you should or should not use. This is left to the discretion of your board of education. We can only advise you on what we feel works best with respect to this program. Teachers who have tried to combine this program with others have found that because the philosophy, techniques and strategies differ so greatly from other programs, it is very difficult to try to combine the two. With respect to student progress, teachers have reported that there is a great difference in the achievement levels of students who receive instruction from a program that uses *Histoires en action!* in full, and one that uses it only in part. The consistency and scaffolding as well as the systematic approach and specifically organized sequence of *Histoires en action!* ensures that second language learning is accelerated. That being said, you must do what is required of your board, and by using some aspects of the program, you will enhance student learning to some degree. However, we do not wish teachers to say that they are doing the AIM or *Histoires en action!* if they are not doing it in full, as this is an unfair representation of the program.

How do I deal with discipline with the 'pas d'anglais' rule?

From the moment that your first AIM class begins, you must be consistent, firm and very strict with the students about the *pas d'anglais* rule. If you are not, students will naturally revert to English, as it is the easiest way for them to communicate. If this occurs, they will never develop their full potential for fluency and will never experience the pride and pleasure of a *pas d'anglais* environment.

Dealing with discipline is no different than interacting with the students in any other communicative situation in the classroom. It is an opportunity to be seized in which authentic communication for a purpose may occur, that may naturally even be somewhat emotionally charged (another important factor in language acquisition!) At the early stages of the program, where this is most challenging, it is important in this situation, as in every interaction, that you be direct, explicit and concrete in your description of the undesirable behaviour. Always use only vocabulary that the students know, even if it is very simple (e.g. *Arrête! Ce n'est pas gentil! Ne frappe pas! Ne prends pas le crayon, etc.*) to ensure comprehension. Speak in short, simple sentences. Use a tone of voice and facial expression that indicate that you are not happy. Make sure that you stop the class and, as you communicate to the student(s) in question, the whole class is, as always, identifying your gestures and speaking to the student(s) as well, thereby acknowledging their awareness and support of appropriate behaviour and practising with your gestural guidance how to express this in French. The students will undoubtedly know what behaviour was inappropriate and also know that you do not tolerate that behaviour. Just like a young baby who does not understand his parents' language but still understands that they do not accept a certain behaviour, your students are experiencing discipline without necessarily understanding every word.



The only difference in this program is that you are dealing with older students who will understand intuitively much more than the young child! As you move through the program, some of your gesture and gesture association teaching and review activities may be based around issues of discipline specific to your classes. Using TLSE, you can ensure that students practise how to express such things as:

“Si quelqu’un se bat/se dispute avec une autre personne dans la classe, on doit parler à l’enseignant. Ce n’est pas gentil de se battre, on doit parler avec les autres si on a un problème, etc.”

Remember that discipline problems are greatly reduced if students are motivated, feel good about themselves and feel that they are successful. Many teachers have commented that using *Histoires en Action!* has brought a high level of focus to their FSL program and that students who would normally be lost, or who have caused discipline problems in the past, are now finding that they understand and can follow. This, in itself, can assist you as a teacher in ensuring that discipline problems are reduced overall.



Do I need to learn all of the gestures first before I start teaching ‘Histoires en action!’?

You do not need to learn all of the gestures at first. The program is designed so that you must not use any word that has not been formally introduced with a gesture. This is so that you ensure confidence and motivation among the students – they always know everything that you are saying and are always saying it with you/for you as you gesture with them. Therefore, you may build your gesture knowledge with the students. For communication purposes, you are always limited to the gestures that you have taught so far. It is for this reason the program is “front-end loaded” with respect to the introduction of gestured vocabulary. In order for students to gain a basic functional vocabulary, they must have at least 700 to 900 words or so. These are introduced in the first two to three units. In unit one, approximately 450 words are introduced, in unit two there are approximately 250 new words, and only 150 words or so are introduced in unit three. These important, high-frequency words introduced in Kit #1 continue to be repeated for the remainder of the program.

At any given time, you must always be very aware of what the students know and what they don’t. This is very easy because they know only the words/gestures that you know! You must constantly make sure that you slow down (you must gesture for the students to speak with you) and paraphrase your thoughts and the way you express things to the students to ensure that you are gesturing only known vocabulary. This takes a bit of personal training, but it is well worth it in return for the confidence and fluency-building that will occur among your students. As long as you know the gestures a few activities ahead of the students, you will be fine.

There is one exception to this. There will be, on occasion, times when student says a word, or when you really want to use a particular word that you have not yet introduced. A DVD-ROM will be available from AIM Language Learning in January, 2006 that will allow you to search for any gesture (for example, a gesture that you introduced previously, but that you have forgotten, or a gesture for a word that you have not introduced, but really want to teach). If there is no gesture for that word, but you and/or the students really want to make it part of their vocabulary, then create a gesture for it with your students! Once you have introduced this new word that you wish students to know, make sure that you incorporate it as part of your gesture reviews or in your TLSE, so that it appears in a variety of contexts in order for it to be acquired.

In the daily lesson template for unit one, do I just do the teacher-led work for a while? I find the teacher-led portion of the program easy to follow. I see the order of the IPG work but I cannot see any indicators as to when and where the IPG work should begin. I know what to do, just not when to start it.

Unit one is the exception to all other units, as you need to spend some time at the beginning doing exclusively gesture work for a while, prior to introducing the play. This is done for several reasons:

1. to teach the technique of gesture as a tool to accelerate language learning;
2. to connect with your students;
3. to teach a lot of vocabulary up front, so that once IPG work does begin, you can send them off with confidence that they have some basic language skills for their first individual, spontaneous interactions in French during IPG work time;
4. to review the play sufficiently so that students know it well enough to read it to you in small groups as their first IPG activity.



The minimum time recommended for exclusively gesture work, prior to introducing the play, is about two weeks. If you find that you are moving a bit slowly through the gesture teaching and review activities outlined in the unit one teacher's unit guide, and would like to introduce the play a little earlier, you can do so, as long as you continue in sequence with the gesture teaching and review activities in between play rehearsals.

Once you have presented the play and you feel confident that the students can read most of it, they can begin the first IPG work, which is to colour the images in the booklet and come to you to read in small groups. Until then, the children are with you for the entire class time, in teacher-led activities where you introduce a lot of vocabulary with gestures, and where you introduce the play as well. Once IPG work begins, from then on your class will be two-thirds teacher-led and one-third IPG work time for the first year. In the first week, for example, if you do two or three teacher-led activities per day, you will do ten to 15 teacher-led activities. Each one teaches and/or reviews a different amount of gestured vocabulary. Simply follow the numbered teacher-led activities in sequence as outlined in the teacher's unit guide. Feel free to repeat any teacher-led activity at any time. You will notice that the numbered teacher-led activities naturally ensure a certain amount of repetition anyway, but if you feel that your students need more, then of course, please provide it!

In Kit #1 there are recommended start times for the IPG work indicated in the side bar of the teacher-led activities. These are only recommended times, based on the fact that in previous teacher-led activities in the unit, we have suggested ways to model these *cahier* activities before allowing the students to do them on their own. If you feel that your students need more practice (younger students generally need more repeated exposure to the written *cahier* work before being able to complete it independently than older students who tend to understand what to do much more quickly), then pad your sequence of teacher-led activities with the amount of additional modelling you feel necessary. As mentioned earlier, we just provide a suggested guideline for you. You must judge what is best for your students, given their age and level of ability. When you feel that your class is ready, and once you have modelled the first *cahier* activity sufficiently,

then the students begin. They will not all complete the *cahiers* at the same pace, so you should always be a step ahead of the fastest students with your modelling of the next *cahier*. Especially during the initial stages of the program, you should be sure to monitor very carefully the pace at which each student is completing his/her *cahier*, and you are shown how to develop routines that ensure that you do this in the description of IPG work. They should come up to you and practice: “*J’ai fini mon cahier/Cahier 2A/3A, etc., alors est-ce que tu peux corriger mon cahier?*” and then: “*Est-ce que je peux avoir le deuxième/troisième cahier/Cahier 3A/4A, etc?*” If you find that some students are moving much faster through the *cahiers* than the average, then you may:

1. ask the student(s) to do the supplementary *cahier* of the same type (e.g. 2B, 3B), before beginning a new type of *cahier* activity;
2. ask the student(s) to assist others who are moving very slowly through the *cahiers*.

Sometimes the strong writers who complete written work quickly are not as confident orally, and would benefit from the oral interaction in French to boost their fluency.

The reason that you don’t want students to rush ahead is that you need time to provide sufficient modelling of the new *cahiers* to come, and students should begin the creative storytelling at approximately the same time, as it is an activity done in partners.

Don’t worry! It will all become easier for you once you are actually doing the program. You will find the rhythm and flow of the units is very similar and you will also find that much less modelling will be necessary as you move through the program and the students also internalize the rhythm and flow, as well as how to do the activities. If you are consistent and establish solid systems and routines as recommended in *Histoires en action!*, your students will become very independent and knowledgeable about those systems and routines and will eventually even be able to instruct a supply teacher!

If you are using the student DVDs, you could give the DVD right from the beginning and ask the students to practise the gestures that have been introduced so far. Once you have introduced the play, they can practise that as well as all the gestures introduced so far, and when you have introduced the song and dance, they can practise everything for that unit!

I saw the rap d’entrée. When do we do this rap and where do we get it?

The *rap d’entrée* is on the Kit #2 DVD. You may use it whenever you wish, once you learn it!

What about homework? Should I give homework? Do I use the student DVD?

There are recommendations in *Histoires en action!* with a homework outline template provided in each teacher’s unit guide as well as on the CD-ROM so that you may modify it to suit your needs. Homework is left completely to your discretion. The DVD is an excellent way to provide homework at the beginning stages of the program, as it is completely student-directed (they need no support from the parents) and it supports exactly what is being learned in class. Even later on the DVD is an excellent tool for at-home support of the program for the learning of:

- new grammatical refinements;
- more gestured vocabulary;
- longer plays and their accompanying songs and dances.



On the DVD students are provided also with models with different voices and accents in French, and the new students benefit from the opportunity to catch up as all the vocabulary from previous units is included on the DVD, as the program moves into Kits #2 and #3. Once students have experience with writing, the *Cahier B* series that also supports directly what has been done in class is an option for written homework. Once creative writing begins, students may complete corrections and final copies at home, but make sure you keep a photocopy of the original at school! Finally, when the personal journal, *Mon journal*, begins in Kit #3, this also may be given for homework.

Is there a suggested flow of plays for different grade levels in the program?

HISTOIRES EN ACTION! STORY UNITS

1. Typical four-year stream, beginning in grade three and up:	2. Accelerative stream for older or more advanced students:	3. Possible stream for split classes in year two:	4. Possible stream for a grade one to six program:
<p>Year One Les trois petits cochons Comment y aller?</p> <p>Year Two L'arbre ungali Louis la grenouille</p> <p>Year Three Chat Angora Le Bistro des animaux</p> <p>Year Four Veux-tu aller au Carnaval? Marc le magicien or Chaperon rouge et le loup fou</p>	<p>Year One Les trois petits cochons Comment y aller?</p> <p>Year Two Louis la grenouille Chat Angora</p> <p>Year Three Veux-tu aller au Carnaval? Marc le magicien or Chaperon rouge et le loup fou</p>	<p>Year One (e.g. grade four) Les trois petits cochons Comment y aller?</p> <p>Year Two (e.g. grade four/ five split where the grade four class is new and grade five has one year's experience) Le chat et la lune Boucles Violettes</p> <p>Year Three Louis la grenouille Chat Angora</p> <p>Year Four Veux-tu aller au Carnaval? Marc le magicien or Chaperon rouge et le loup fou</p>	<p>Grade one Les trois petits cochons Le chat et la lune (unit one from the add-on Kit #1)</p> <p>Grade two Comment y aller? Boucles Violettes (unit two from the add-on Kit #1)</p> <p>Grade three L'arbre ungali Les animaux du bayou (unit three from the add-on Kit #1)</p> <p>Grade four Louis la grenouille Chat Angora</p> <p>Grade five Le bistro des animaux Veux-tu aller au Carnaval?</p> <p>Grade six Marc le magicien Chaperon rouge et le loup fou</p>



I have 80-minute classes and older students. Do you have lesson templates for this?

The following is a possible 80-minute template:

Entry routine	5 minutes
Teacher-led activity	15-20 minutes
IPG activity	15-20 minutes
Oral work: Group play rehearsal or partner review of gestures, questions, oral story retelling or game	
Teacher-led activity	15-20 minutes
IPG Activity	15-20 minutes
Written or combined oral/written work <i>Cahier</i> , creative writing in partners)	
Leaving routine	5 minutes

The teacher-led activities or IPG work may vary between 15 to 20 minutes, depending on whether this is a beginner class in the program or a more experienced one. A beginner class needs much more teacher-led activity time, and as the class becomes more experienced, much more emphasis and time should be allotted for IPG work time. This design of your daily 80-minute lesson is also dependent on what point you have reached in the unit, or how much you want to focus on the teaching/review of concepts (longer teacher-led activity time), or on the individual practice and application of concepts (longer IPG work time).

