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52,500 NON-FRENCH-SPEAKING STUDENTS WERE ENROLLED DURING THE 2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR

- **The 2013 law** to reform French schools reaffirmed the necessity of providing inclusive schooling for children with special needs.
- **French schools** are committed to giving students who need help learning French as a second language the required assistance.
- **Special teaching units and academic centers** attend to the needs of this special population.

Guaranteed access to education

The French national education system guarantees newly arrived students who do not speak French access to education. This conforms with French law and with international agreements that guarantee all children from 6 to 16 years access to instruction once they are in the country, regardless of their nationality, personal situation or way of life.

Education Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem commented:

“ In 2013, the law to reform French schools reaffirmed unequivocally the necessity of promoting an inclusive school for all students with special educational needs. This includes students with the need to learn French as a second language. ”

The education of non-French-speaking children is organized according to several principles:

- fighting discrimination;
- coordinating reception procedures;
- acquiring a common core of knowledge, skills and culture;

- learning French as a second language;

The mastery of French

The mastery of the French language is an important issue for the success of non-French-speaking students. Special teaching teams (known by the acronym **UPE2A**) for the newly arrived students allow the concerned students to be enrolled in mainstream classrooms while at the same time receiving special instruction in French as a second language, according to their needs and their previous language experience.

More particularly, special academic centers, known as **Casnav**, see to the education of newly arrived non-French-speaking children and children from itinerant families. They help teachers in mainstream classrooms better understand the specific needs of the special-needs students and adapt their teaching practices.

How it works

When they first enter the French educational system, students in need of language education are subject to an assessment of their prior learning, which aims to determine the most suitable class for them. The initial placement of students will depend upon their degree of schooling.

In elementary schools, the assessment is made locally by a UPE2A teacher (in 65% of cases) or by the teaching staff (19%). For middle and high schools, either a Center for Information and Orientation (CIO) determines student placement (31%) or a Casnav (29%).

When they enter the French educational system, these special-needs students are enrolled in a mainstream class corresponding to their level of learning, not to exceed an age gap of more than two years. At the same time, they may be educated wholly or in part in special programs (UPE2A, language tutoring, temporary accommodation courses). Students who have had little or no schooling in their country of origin may be enrolled in programs specifically designed for them (UPE2A-NSA).

Almost 90% of these students benefit from special language courses or tutoring. This sort of language support is most common in middle school: 91% of these middle school students benefit. In elementary school and high school, the proportion of pupils in mainstream classes without language support is slightly higher (13% and 17%).

ABOUT NON-FRENCH SPEAKERS IN THE FRENCH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Key figures for the school year 2014-2015

52,500 students with a specific need for assistance in learning French as a second language were enrolled in French schools, including 25,500 in elementary school, 22,300 in middle school and 4,700 in high school.

71% of these students arrived during the course of the school year.

9 out of 10 benefit from some sort of special education course or program for students of French as a second language.

32% are in the Ile-de-France department, the largest percentage among the departments.

They are taught in **9,200** schools and educational establishments.

64% of elementary school students are taught in an age-appropriate class, though this percentage declines with older students.

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If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche at +33 (0)1 55 55 30 10 or spresse@education.gouv.fr