

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
ACCENT AND ODYSSEY
ANNUAL REPORT 2005-06



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ORGANIZATION AND GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) was established in 1967 to provide a means for the fullest possible cooperation among provincial and territorial governments in areas of mutual interest and concern in education. CMEC also collaborates with other educational organizations and with the federal government to promote the development of education in Canada. The Official-Language Monitor Program (OLMP) is an example of this collaboration and, as such, contributes to the attainment of CMEC's goals.

Accent and Odyssey (formerly called the Official-Language Monitor Program) are funded by Canadian Heritage and are administered on a decentralized basis by the provinces and territories. CMEC coordinates the programs at the pan-Canadian level, in collaboration with the provinces and territories. The programs' total budget is specified in the agreement concluded under the protocol, which establishes quotas, pay for language assistants, transportation which includes travel and commuting allowances, and the amounts allocated to training and to the resources required for the proper operation of the programs.

OVERVIEW OF ACCENT AND ODYSSEY

The Official-Language Monitor Program was established in 1973, to promote Canada's two official languages and the culture they convey by encouraging Canadian young people to make their language and culture known to students in a region other than their own. Under the program, educational institutions throughout the country receive the services of language assistants.

By participating in *Accent and Odyssey*, language assistants have the opportunity to improve their knowledge of their second language, to better understand the culture of those who use this second language, and to become more familiar with the cultural diversity that characterizes Canada. They can also share their language and culture with second-language students or with students from francophone minority-language communities in various regions of Canada.

Salaries are offered to students throughout Canada, to enable them to perform the duties of part-time or full-time language assistants teaching a second language or teaching French as a first language in a minority-language community.

In 2004, an advertising agency was hired to develop a marketing strategy that would give the programs offered by CMEC's Official-Languages Unit a more youthful image and thus enable them to reach a broader public. As part of its strategy, OLMP changed its name and became Accent for part-time language assistants and Odyssey for full-time assistants. The two names became official in 2005-06.

Some terms have been changed in line with the name changes begun last year. For example, the English term "local coordinator" has been replaced by "supervisor," and the French term "coordonnateur local" has become "responsable."

The English term "provincial and territorial coordinator" has likewise become "coordinator." A corresponding change has been made in French: the term "coordonnateur provincial et territorial" has been shortened to "coordonnateur."

In accordance with the temporary provisions concluded by the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Corporation of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, on November 4, 2005, \$1.8 million was to be added to the guaranteed base funding, in order to increase the number of language assistants and to provide more money for some budget items. The terms and conditions of these temporary provisions are similar to those in the previous agreement.

ADMINISTRATION

The following table briefly describes the roles of the various parties involved in administering the programs.

ACCENT AND ODYSSEY ADMINISTRATION 2005-06

<p>Department of Canadian Heritage Role: provides funding</p>
<p>National coordinator Council of Ministers of Education, Canada Role: administers the program at the pan-Canadian level</p>
<p>Coordinators Role: administer the program at the provincial or territorial level</p>
<p>Supervisors Educational institutions and school boards Role: manage the program at the local level</p>
<p>Teachers and instructors Educational institutions Role: supervise language assistants</p>
<p>Language assistants Role: help students with the spoken language and cultural awareness through supplementary activities conducted under the supervision of teachers</p>

Pan-Canadian coordination

The national coordinator, who is employed by CMEC, is responsible for administering the programs at the pan-Canadian level, and the coordinators are responsible for administering them in their respective jurisdictions. The national coordinator reports to the Director of Official-Languages Programs at CMEC.

In addition to ensuring the smooth running of Accent and Odyssey across the country, the national coordinator is responsible for implementing various projects that contribute to the proper management of the other official-languages programs. In consultation with the coordinators, he or she defines the administrative processes and rules governing the operation of Accent and Odyssey and closely supervises implementation of the programs in educational institutions.

In addition, under the national coordinator's supervision, the Official-Languages Programs (OLP) team handles the preparation of all documents intended for supervisors, instructors, teachers, and language assistants. The national coordinator also supervises the preparation of financial reports and assessments pertaining to Accent and Odyssey. These documents are then submitted to the Department of Canadian Heritage and to the coordinators.

Note 1: See Appendix 1 for the list of Accent and Odyssey documents.

During the 2005-06 fiscal year, Boyd Pelley was Director of Official-Languages Programs, Antonella Manca-Mangoff was National Coordinator, and Chantal Castel-Branco was Assistant National Coordinator.

Coordinators

Coordinators manage the program in their respective provinces or territories. In particular, they promote the programs, recruit and assign language assistants, and provide liaison with the national coordinator, supervisors, educational institutions, school boards, teachers, instructors, and language assistants.

Note 2: See Appendix 2 for a list of Accent and Odyssey coordinators.

Supervisors

The supervisor introduces a language assistant to the school board and community and keeps in touch with him or her during the program year. The institution or school board to which the language assistant is assigned is considered to be his or her employer. Supervisors also deal with most employment issues, such as holiday dates, compensation due to illness, dismissal, and so forth.

Teachers

Language assistants work under the direction of teachers, who guide them in choosing activities to undertake while giving them the opportunity to develop activities. Teachers familiarize language assistants with the language program offered in their institution and inform them of the various activities organized around language learning.

Language assistants

Language assistants organize supplementary activities designed to complement the instruction provided, **not to replace it**. They also help students to learn their second language or to improve their first language (in the case of teaching French in a minority-language community). Language assistants work closely with teachers to prepare activities that focus on the cultural aspects of the language.

Language assistants are assigned to institutions where English or French is taught as a second language or where French is taught as a first language helping students to become more familiar with the language and with the culture represented by the target language. They may participate in a program on either a full-time or a part-time basis.

The part-time language assistant program (Accent) is designed for full-time postsecondary students who are looking to work eight hours a week as language assistants. As a general rule, assistants work and study outside the jurisdiction where they have permanent residence. They work from September to April and receive pay of \$4,000 for eight months of employment. They also receive a travel allowance for a return trip between their home jurisdiction and the host province or territory. They may also receive a commuting allowance set by the provincial or territorial coordination staff.

Participants in the full-time language assistant program (Odyssey) work 25 hours a week in rural or semi-urban areas. They work from September to May and receive \$15,400 for nine months of employment. They are also reimbursed for two return trips between their home jurisdiction and their host province or territory. In addition, they take part in the Pan-Canadian Training Session.

SELECTION OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS

The selection process for 2005-06 took place in late April 2005. Coordinators first conducted interviews of candidates in their jurisdiction and shared their candidate evaluation files with coordinators in other provinces and territories. The supervisor of the host jurisdiction made the final selection, and successful candidates were informed that they had been selected to participate in the program.

ODYSSEY PAN-CANADIAN TRAINING SESSION

The CMEC organizes a pan-Canadian training session for full-time language assistants who are being hired for the first time. The aim of this session is to train language assistants in the various aspects of their work. The language assistants attend workshops on preparing and presenting classroom activities and meet the coordinator of their host province or territory, a representative of Canadian Heritage, and CMEC staff. They also receive practical advice from second-year language assistants.

The 2005-06 session was held at the Hôtel Gouverneurs in Sainte-Foy, Quebec, from August 26 to 28, 2005.

A total of 180 full-time language assistants participated in the training session. Of this number, 117 (65 per cent) were assistants for French as a second language (FSL) or French as a first language (FFL), and 63 (35 per cent) were English-as-a-second-language (ESL) assistants.

Note 3: The percentages given in this report have been rounded, and the totals may not always equal 100 per cent. The abbreviations FSL, FFL, and ESL designate the three categories of language programs offered.

Various workshops were organized for FSL, FFL, or ESL assistants. Participants generally agreed that the training session had helped them to prepare to perform their duties.

Note 4: See Appendix 3 for the report on the 2005-06 Odyssey Pan-Canadian Training Session.

COORDINATORS' MEETINGS

The national coordinator and provincial and territorial coordination staff met on two occasions. The first meeting took place on August 25, 2005, in Quebec City; the second was held on February 9, 2006, in Victoria, British Columbia.

Members of the subcommittee met twice to discuss promoting the program. The first meeting was held in Toronto on October 24 and 25, 2005, and the second meeting, also in Toronto, took place on June 26 and 27, 2006.

FINANCIAL AND STATISTICAL DATA

BUDGET

The 2005-06 agreement between the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Corporation of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada provided for a total budget of \$9,527,700 for Accent and Odyssey, covering pay for language assistants, transportation which includes travel and commuting allowances, and the costs of training and materials. This amount also includes money transferred by the provinces and territories to the Accent and Odyssey budget, in order to offer more language assistant positions through bilateral agreements signed under the Official Languages in Education Protocol (OLEP). Language assistants must pay for their room and board and pocket money.

Part-time assistants

The agreement on Accent and Odyssey between the federal government and the Corporation of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada provided for the following contributions:

- Remuneration of \$4,000 for eight months of employment at a rate of eight hours of work per week
- Reimbursement of one return trip between the home jurisdiction and the host province or territory
- An average commuting allowance of \$130 per part-time language assistant
- A training allowance of \$92

Full-time assistants

The agreement also provided for the following contributions:

- Remuneration of \$15,400 for nine months of employment at a rate of 25 hours of work per week
- Reimbursement for two return trips between the home jurisdiction and the host province or territory (at the beginning and end of the year and in the middle of the year)
- A training allowance of approximately \$850 for each full-time assistant, of which \$400 is allocated for provincial or territorial training

In 2005-06, the remuneration of \$15,400 included travel and commuting allowances. Remuneration for language assistants and some allowances are taxable income.

EXPENSES

In 2005-06, total Accent and Odyssey expenses were \$8,219,990, or 86 per cent of the authorized amount. This amount includes goods and services tax (GST) refunds of \$79,017.

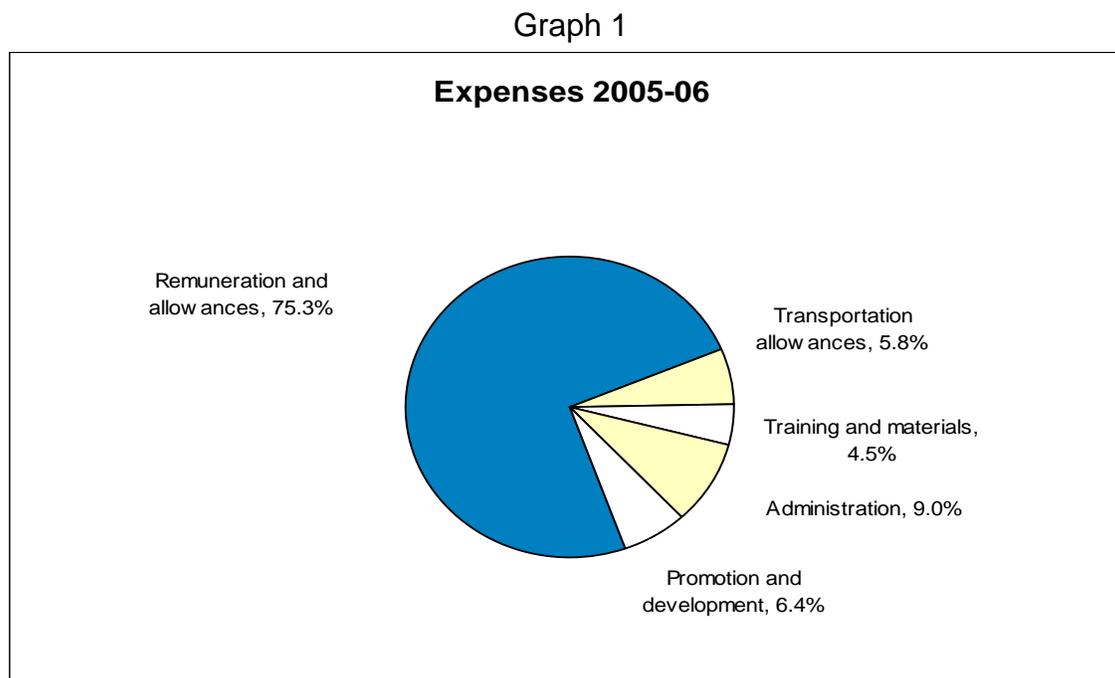
Note 5: Appendix 4 indicates revenue and expenses as indicated on the duly audited financial statements for 2005-06.

A total of \$7,033,003 was disbursed to the provinces and territories for Accent and Odyssey. Disbursements included payments for remuneration, transportation which includes travel and commuting allowances, and the cost of training, materials, and advertising.

Note 6: Appendix 5 gives a summary of 2005-06 provincial and territorial disbursements for Accent and Odyssey.

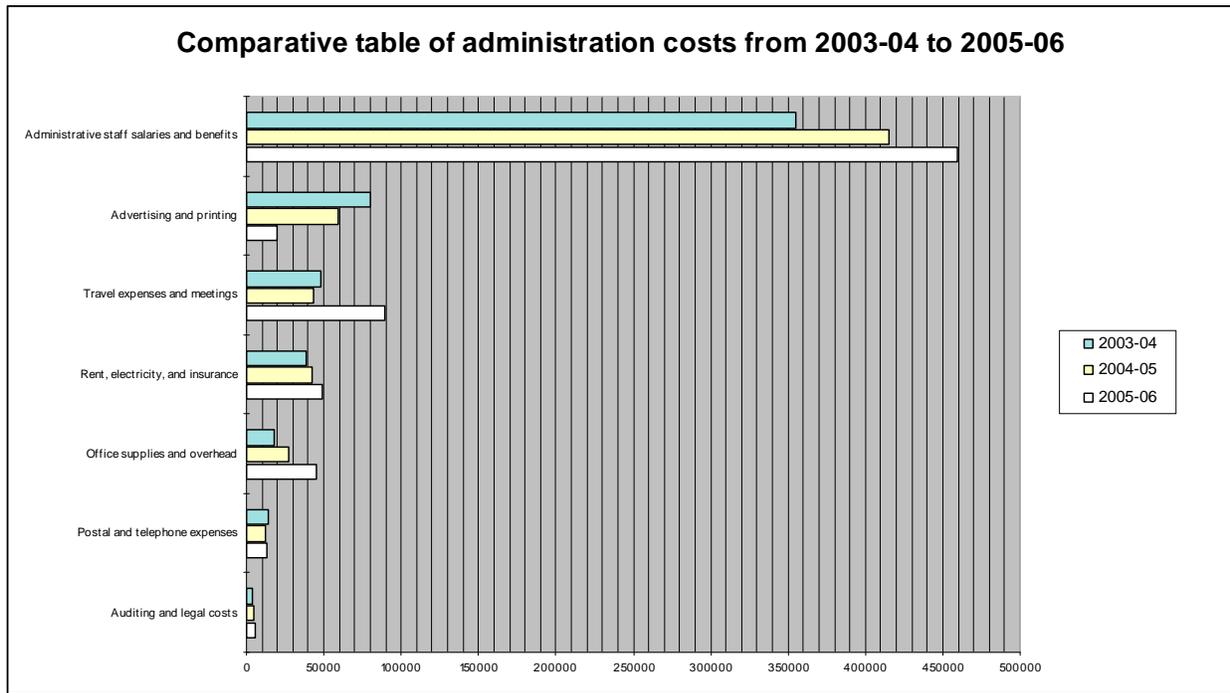
Administration

In 2005-06, total Accent and Odyssey administrative expenses were \$738,588, or 9.0 per cent of overall expenses. Graph 1 presents the administration expenses as a proportion of overall expenses.



The administrative expenses for the last three years are compared in Graph 2.

Graph 2



Remuneration and allowances

Provincial and territorial disbursements for remuneration and allowances totalled \$6,191,281, or 75.3 per cent of overall expenses.

Transportation allowances (Travel and commuting)

Disbursements for transportation allowances totalled \$472,992, or 5.8 per cent of overall expenses. Transportation allowances were divided as follows: interprovincial travel, \$461,125; commuting, \$11,867.

Training and materials

Training and materials disbursements totalled \$368,730, representing 4.5 per cent of overall expenses.

Expenses for the Pan-Canadian Training Session for full-time language assistants were \$160,869. Other training costs, amounting to \$207,860, were incurred for training sessions organized during the year by the provinces and the territories.

Promotion and development

Expenditures to promote Accent and Odyssey amounted to \$527,416 in all, or 6.4 per cent of total expenses. Promotion expenses were divided as follows: remuneration and allowances paid to promotion agents, \$282,158; database, \$46,438 promotional materials, \$159,690; and disbursements to the jurisdictions for advertising, \$39,130.

QUOTAS

Pan-Canadian quotas

In 2005-06, there were 895 language assistant positions throughout Canada, including positions created as a result of provincial and territorial transfers to Accent and Odyssey.

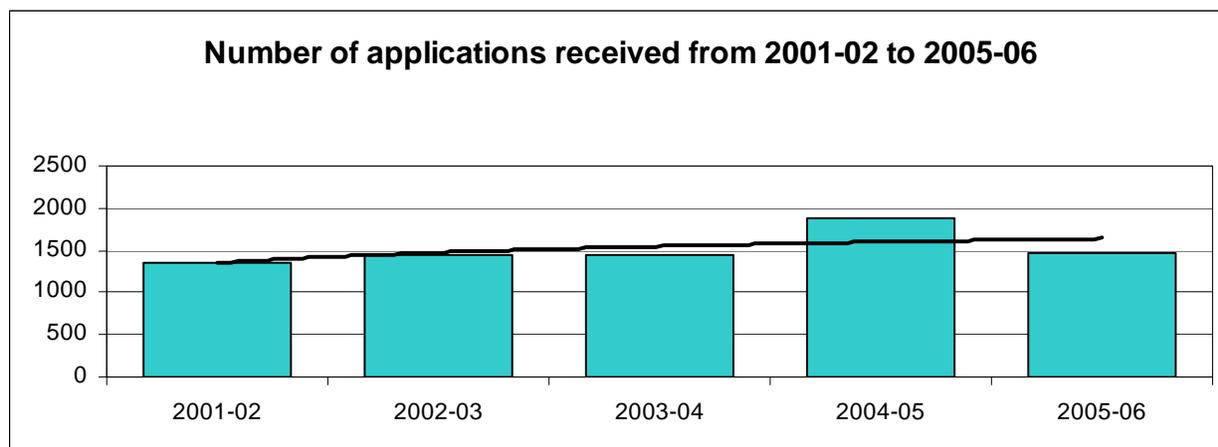
Note 7: See Appendix 6 for the 2005-06 Accent and Odyssey language assistant quotas, including transfers.

STATISTICAL DATA

Applications

Graph 3 illustrates the number of applications received over the last five years.

Graph 3



Statistical portrait of Accent and Odyssey 2005–06

A total of 876 language assistants participated in the program in 2005–06. This figure includes withdrawals and replacements. For a complete picture, see Appendices 7, 8, and 9.

Note 8: See Appendices 7 and 8 for a pan-Canadian statistical portrait of Accent and Odyssey 2005-06 and Appendices 8A to 8M for the statistical portraits of individual provinces and territories.

Note 9: See Appendix 9 for a table giving part-time and full-time participation by home province or territory and by host province or territory for all language assistants who worked at some time during 2005-06.

Language assistants

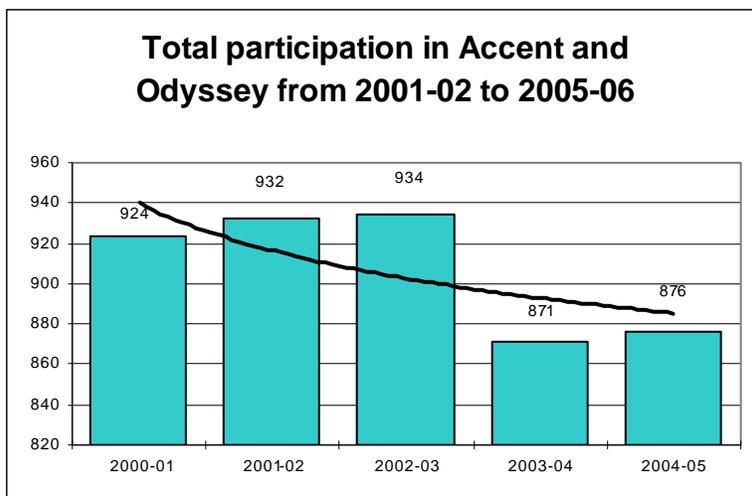
A total of 364 Accent language assistants and 100 Odyssey language assistants were hired from within their home province or territory in 2005–06.

Note 10: See Appendix 9 (shaded diagonal line) for the number of Accent and Odyssey language assistants hired in 2005-06.

Statistical overview

The figures presented in Graph 4 reflect the total number of participants over the last five years, including withdrawals and replacements.

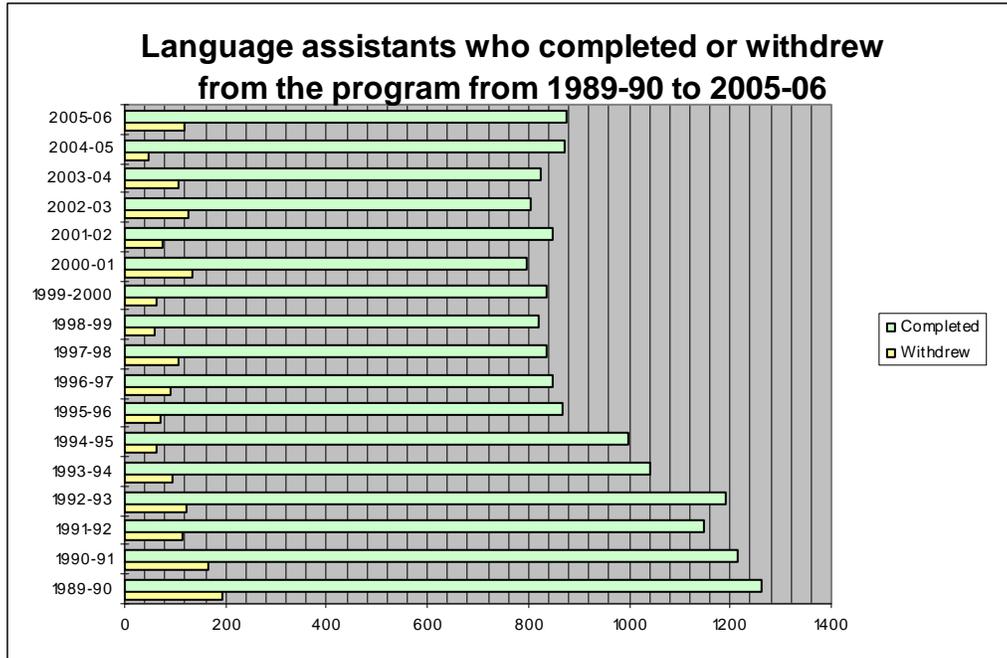
Graph 4



Accent and Odyssey statistical history

Graph 5 gives a statistical history of the language assistant program from 1989-90 to 2005-06.

Graph 5



Statistical data from 1989-90 to 2005-06 were collected by CMEC.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Every year, CMEC retains an independent consultant to compile and analyze the responses given on questionnaires filled out by language assistants, supervisors, and teachers who worked with language assistants. This procedure ensures an objective analysis of the statistics produced from these questionnaires.

EVALUATION BY LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS

Language assistants who remained on the job until the end of the year 2005-06 were asked to fill out an evaluation questionnaire. A total of 441 language assistants completed the questionnaire.

The questionnaire for language assistants included in-depth questions on the following topics:

- Experience and training
- Activities and functions
- Recruitment
- Employment
- Evaluation of Accent and Odyssey

Evaluation of duties

Language assistants also had to indicate, in the questionnaire, the amount of time they devoted to the following activities:

- Guiding **oral activities** of students (discussions, singing, reading, etc.)
- Guiding **writing activities** (helping students to write compositions, essays, homework, etc.)
- **Preparing school activities** (cutting and pasting, library research, preparing audio tapes, etc.)
- Engaging in various activities **other** than those mentioned above

Note 11: Appendix 10 gives the results of the questionnaire for language assistants hired during 2005-06.

EVALUATION BY TEACHERS

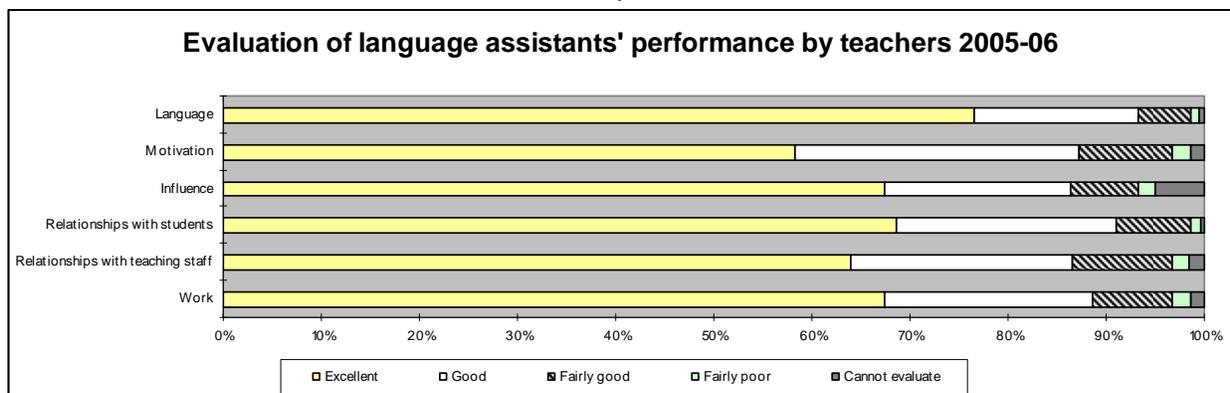
In 2005-06, teachers completed and returned 798 questionnaires.

Evaluation of duties

Teachers had to indicate how much time the language assistant spent with teaching staff guiding oral and written activities, preparing activities for students at school, and engaging in various other activities (examples are given above, in the section “Evaluation by language assistants — Evaluation of duties”).

Graph 6 presents the results of teachers' evaluation of the work of language assistants.

Graph 6



Legend: Language: has the appropriate command of the spoken language to be taught to students
 Motivation: contributes to the students' development of their spoken language
 Influence: develops a positive attitude toward culture
 Relationships with students: has good relationships with students
 Relationships with teaching staff: has good relationships with the school's teaching staff
 Work: is capable of carrying out assigned tasks

Note 12: Appendix 11 presents the complete results of the survey conducted with teachers in 2005-06.

EVALUATION BY SUPERVISORS

An evaluation questionnaire was distributed to all supervisors. In 2005-06, a total of 176 supervisors completed and returned the questionnaire.

Most educational institutions had a part-time or a full-time language assistant. Institutions receiving the services of part-time language assistants were more likely than institutions employing full-time assistants to have more than one language assistant.

Evaluation of duties

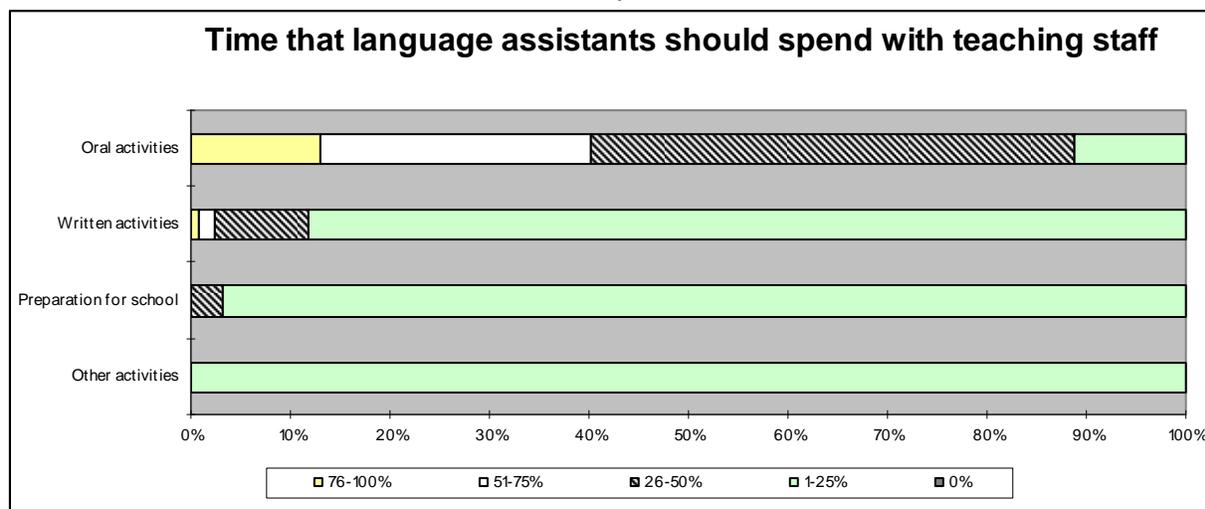
The supervisors also had to indicate how much time, in their opinion, language assistants should devote to the following activities:

- Helping teaching staff with oral activities that help students to learn the language and to become familiar with the culture that it represents
- Helping teaching staff with written activities that help students to learn the language and become familiar with the culture that it represents
- Preparing activities for school (cutting and pasting, library research, preparing audio tapes, etc.)
- Engaging in various activities other than those mentioned above

Like the language assistants and the teachers, supervisors indicated how much time they thought a language assistant should spend with the teacher pursuing oral and written activities, preparing activities for school, and carrying out various other activities (examples are given in the section “Evaluation by language assistants — Evaluation of duties”).

Graph 7 summarizes the supervisors’ responses.

Graph 7



Note 13: Appendix 12 presents the complete results of the survey conducted with supervisors for 2005-06.

CONCLUSION

In 2005-06, Accent and Odyssey went well overall. Various improvements were made to the programs in terms of budget, thanks to the additional \$1.8 million that was again granted by the Department of Canadian Heritage. These improvements included producing two videos, one on the role of the language assistant and the other on the language assistant interview process. The rate of satisfaction with the programs was very high among both language assistants and teachers. They reminded us that the programs are needed as vehicles for language and culture and testified to the positive impact of the program on their students.