

Welcome to
French Immersion
In
School District #59

Revised Edition 2009

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What is meant by "French Immersion?"

Immersion programs are designed to provide non-francophone children with a high degree of proficiency in the French Language

While an exposure to a second language is beneficial, French Immersion broadens and deepens that exposure. In the Immersion program French is not only a subject, it is the language of instruction and a means of communication. Teachers follow the same provincial curriculum guidelines as in the regular program only texts are written in French

Careful ongoing evaluation indicates that after several years in a French Immersion program students perform as well as or better than students in the regular English program on performance tasks conducted in English.

An early immersion program capitalizes on children's natural inclination to learn languages. Early immersion works well because young children lack self-consciousness, prejudice, and negativism and love mimicry, memorization and repetition. The process of language learning works best when the learner is engaged in vital, necessary communication. Early immersion provides more time working in a second language...and more time means better success.

Research has shown:

- that the young child learns to speak more fluently
- that language learning poses few problems for the young child
- that an early immersion program offers maximum exposure to French; success in learning a language is directly related to the amount of exposure to it.

Goals of the French Immersion Programs

The program aims to develop a bilingual student who is capable of functioning successfully in either language.

Upon graduation the student should:

- have fulfilled all requirements for high school graduation
- have achieved equivalent levels of knowledge and skill in all subject areas whether they are taught in English or French
- be functionally bilingual, that is:
 - to be able and willing to participate easily in conversations in French or English
 - to be able to further their education in French or English
 - to be able to accept employment using either French or English as the working language.

What to Expect When Enrolling Your Child in French Immersion.

In Kindergarten the teacher addresses the class in French, although the children often continue to use English, especially among themselves. By the end of the year children are able to recognize a large vocabulary and are attempting to use single words and few short sentences. They are able to follow the teacher's instruction and to understand simple stories.

In Grade 1 all instruction is given in French. Speaking skills receive greater emphasis and the children improve at expressing themselves in French. They are usually speaking only French in

the classroom by end of December. By the end of grade 1, children are reading leveled texts that are appropriate for that grade and continue to build on the speaking, listening, vocabulary, reading and writing skills.

Beginning in Grade 3, the students are taught in English language arts as well as French language arts. From this point on in the program the English content increases and the French content decreases each year.

Approximate hours of instruction in French:

Program	Regular Program	French Immersion
Kindergarten	0	500
Grades 1-3	0	2000
Grades 4-7	240	4000
Grades 8-10	300	1,500
Grades 11-12	200	300
Total	----- 740	----- 8300

Report Cards and Grade Level Expectations

The board favors a French Immersion program which will ensure a strong French academic program for students in elementary and secondary schools. To achieve and maintain a high level of competency in French, French Immersion programs will have the following French-English components.

1. Kindergarten to grade 2 100% instruction in French
2. Grade 3-7 75-80% instruction in French
20-25% instruction in English
Language Arts (A minor increase at the grade seven level may be appropriate)
3. Grades 8-10 Minimum of 50% (*4 courses instruction in French
4. Grade 11 Minimum of 25% (*2 courses) instruction in French
5. Grade 12 Minimum of 12.5% (*1 course) instruction in French

Programming depends on specialist staff and timetabling.

The District underlines the importance of completing, to the grade 12 level, the French Immersion program chosen at the Elementary school.

Grade Level Expectations and Report Cards

French Immersion students receive all or most of their instruction in French from Kindergarten to grade 12. As indicated before, although instruction is in French, curriculum outcomes are the same as in the English program as outlined by the Ministry of Education. Standards and expectations are outlined in the BC Performance Standards for each grade level.

Report cards at the primary level (K-3) are comprised of anecdotal reports and the levels of performance are described as approaching expectations, minimally meeting expectations, fully meeting expectations or exceeding expectations based on the performance standards for each grade.

By the end of Kindergarten, children should understand many common phrases and words relating to events that take place in class. By the end of Kindergarten, many children will be starting to use key phrases such as "je veux aller boire", (I want a drink) and "je vais a la toilette") The focus in Kindergarten is on readiness skills for all curriculum areas, as well as vocabulary building.

Kindergarten students are screened for early identification of readiness skills. This is done in English and in French. This information is used to inform the classroom teacher as to areas of need for each child. The children are retested again in May, and if a child is at risk in terms of cognitive abilities, a discussion with parents will occur with the Kindergarten teacher as to areas of strengths and needs of the child. A possible recommendation might be made as to whether or not your child should continue in the French Immersion program or a plan on how to support the child in French Immersion is discussed and information passed to the next year's classroom teacher. The child will continue to be tracked the

following year to his/her progression in the French Program if it is not an issue of cognitive abilities but one of learning a second language as this is the first time children are introduced to a second language and a language base is being developed.

By the end of Grade one, students should be able to use French to express their basic needs and describe what they are doing. Reading and writing skills are developing, though not as quite as rapidly as those of children in the English program. This is because the French Immersion students need much more time to develop their understanding of the French language and increase their vocabulary. We recognize that students need to build the structures of the language, acquire vocabulary and oral speaking skills before reading and writing skills will progress in the French program. Teachers continue to track the students closely. Leveled books and guided reading becomes an integral part of the learning process. Children are assessed for reading levels and are taught at their instructional level.

By the end of Grade two, students should be expressing themselves quite fluently in French though an occasional English word may be used if the French word is unknown. Children should have mastered the basics of reading and should be able to express simple ideas in written form. This is important because in grade 3 they will also receive instruction in reading and writing in English. Skills learned in French transfer to the English language because the same strategies are taught in either language. However, by the end of grade two, if the student continues to struggle with the expectations at this grade level, further assessments will be given to the child to determine if there is indeed a learning difficulty. A meeting with the parent to discuss difficulties, assessment plans and an individual education plan would then be created to meet the learner's needs.

By Grade 3, students should be quite comfortable in the basic categories of communication: speaking, listening, reading and writing in French. Complex reading and mathematical skills should be quite evident in grade 3

Children become much more at ease learning French as their competency in the language increase.

Report Cards at the intermediate level (Gr 4-12) are a combination of anecdotal reports and a letter grade. Assessment is based on a combination of formative and summative assessment in relation to the learning outcomes for each year.

By Grade 4-7, students should have the basic structures and phonemic patterns of the French language and are working on reading much more complex reading material. Fluency and comprehension of complex texts in variety of forms (fiction and non-fiction) are assessed. Specific skills and strategies are taught to enable students to become very competent in their learning. Students continue to be tracked closely and if needed, individual educational plans are created with the parents, teacher and learning assistant.

Resources

Library

The school has a French section in the library consisting of both fiction and non-fiction books, as well as cassettes, cds, maps, magazines, films and computer programs.

New material is continually added to the collection of French reading material for students. There are books available for all ages and abilities

Students in French Immersion may sign out English books from the library. They may also work with English books for research if the material is not available in French.

Learning Assistance

For children having difficulties, the school provides the services of a learning assistant. This specialist, whenever possible and suitable, works in French with individuals or small groups within the classroom. The level of service provided is dependent on budget constraints.

Materials

Books and teacher resources which support the curriculum are provided by the Ministry of Education for most subjects. Where there are changes to the curriculum or text books, it takes longer for the text to become available in French. In such cases, teachers use whatever materials are available in the school or from district resources to support the program. Teachers often find it necessary to create their own materials or adapt and translate English materials.

District Resources

All students in the district have access to specialist such as counselors, speech and language pathologists as well as student testing. These services are only available in English.

Community Resources.

Canadian Parents for French (CPF)

CPF is a national voluntary association of parents interested in promoting the best possible French second language program in schools. It acts as an information sharing resource for parents, educators, governments and the public on French education opportunities in Canada. Membership in CPF is open to anyone interested in furthering the goal of the organization: to support French second-language education.

What Does CPF Do Locally?

1. Assist the parents in establishing and maintaining the best possible French programs in their district.
2. Arrange special events to enrich and expand school programs
3. Plan summer and/or after-school activities to reinforce children's French language skills.
4. Establish effective communications between parents, teachers and school officials.

JOIN THE LOCAL CHAPTER OF CPF-NOTE THE DATES OF WHEN CPF MEETS AT THE SCHOOL IN EARLY FALL.

OR....These dates are advertised in school newsletters or..

-CONTACT KENDRA COURNOYER-CPF PRESIDENT

The Role of the Parent of a French Immersion Student

Enrolling your child in the French Immersion program requires commitment and support in your child's learning. While recognizing that most parents cannot speak the French language, there are specific things that parents can do to support their child's learning. Research shows that the more active role a parent takes in their child's learning, the greater academic success for their child.

How To Support Your Child

Preparing Your Child for School

For Kindergarten, it is important to talk to your child about going to school before opening day in September. Let your child know that the teacher will be speaking French. Reassure your child that the other children will speak English and that the teacher will understand English and allow it to be spoken. Stress the positive: your child will be meeting many new friends; learning new songs; games; and learning to do new things in French!

Encouraging and Supporting Your Child

Parent encouragement makes a great difference in a child's attitude towards school. Set aside 15 minutes a day to review with your child and to talk about what he/she did in school. Your enthusiasm for the French Immersion program is very important.

Reading to Your Child

Read to your child on a regular basis in English to provide a background of experiences and vocabulary. Reading enriches the child as he/she learns the patterns and rhythms of the language

while being read to. It is also a good way to develop your child's interest in learning to read. Because there is no formal English instruction until grade 3, reading and encouraging the use of correct grammatical structures in his/her speech can fill this gap.

The Need for a Break

At first, students may come home a little weary. After all they have to concentrate on new concepts and vocabulary all day long in a new language! Ensure that they get adequate rest and relaxation from the mental effort of the day. Be proud of their achievements, but be patient if they do not want to talk about school. Eventually, when their competence in the language increases, they eventually will.

Home and School Communication

Communication between parents and teachers is essential. Teachers welcome visits from you to discuss your child's progress or any other problems or concerns you may have regarding your child's schooling. Casual calls are encouraged or if desired, you are welcome to contact the teacher to set up a date and time for a formal interview

Classroom Relationships

It is important to do all you can to encourage good relations between members of your child's class. Because there is often only one French Immersion class per grade level, a student may spend all his/her elementary years with the same classmates. In the event of multi-age classrooms, students are grouped heterogeneously with their educational interest in mind. Placement is based on a number of factors that best benefits that child's education.

Homework

Formal homework assignments begin in Grade 4. However, some home study may be requested in the primary years as well. All homework and assignments are intended as review of topics already covered in class and do not include new work. In the upper grades, when academics become more demanding, check with the student to see whether or not he/she has work to complete for the next day. With your child, create a small area where your child can complete the work without distractions. Your child should be able to do homework independently. Students can, if necessary, translate directions to facilitate parental involvement. Math concepts, for example, are the same in either language-only the language of instruction is different

Completion of tasks sent home is very important as they can be tasks to reinforce skills taught in class. Students are assessed using the BC Performance Standards. If your child is consistently having difficulty, please feel free to talk to the teacher.

Frequently asked Questions

Will being in French Immersion affect my child's English language skills?

In early total immersion there are temporary lags in some aspects of English skills until English instruction is introduced. When English Language Arts is introduced, immersion students catch up to children in regular programs rapidly, suggesting that a considerable transfer of language skills take place from French to English. It usually takes somewhat longer for children to catch up in the technicals aspects of English skills such as punctuation and spelling. For this reason, it is suggested that parents read to their children in English, and ask for help in writing grocery lists, letters to relatives, etc.

Will my child be bilingual?

This depends on your definition of bilingual. Your child will be able to function in two languages. By grade 6 students will have near native proficiency in listening and comprehension. Their speaking and writing skills will differ from their native peers but they will have little difficulty in making themselves understood.

Do family members have to be able to speak French?

The majority of immersion families do not speak French. The program is designed for children of non-French speaking families.

Will my child learn the same things as students in English classes?

All French Immersion teachers must follow the guidelines of the provincial Ministry of Education. Materials in French cover the same basic curriculum as in English.

Is French Immersion only for "Bright" children?

The only children who are poor candidates for French Immersion are those with poor auditory discrimination (unable to remember what was heard). French Immersion is not recommended for children who are language delayed (unable to form sentences) in their first language. We also strongly advise parents that if their child demonstrates signs of poor attention, behavior and poor attending skills, this may not be for your child. Learning a second language requires that the child is able to listen to instruction, follow the classroom routines and to stay on task . Remember, your child will be learning a second language and being able to focus is very important to his/her learning.

Generally, a child will do as well or poorly in French Immersion as he/she would in an English program. By the end of gr. 1, if a child is struggling with the acquisition of the French language, a conference with the parents will be held to discuss issues or concerns.

What will happen if my child does not continue in immersion?

This will depend on the individual child. He/she will not have the same background and language experiences as students in the English program. Therefore leaving immersion prior to

grade four will have the child at a disadvantage and may pose academic difficulties. Students who leave immersion in the late intermediate years create another challenge; how are they to be credited for second language French and in what second language course should they be placed/ Each case must be resolved individually. Before the final decision is made, consultation with the child, the teacher and school administration is strongly recommended.

How will my child communicate with and understand the teacher?

Students will communicate in English until they have the language skills necessary to express themselves in French. They will be able to understand French much earlier than they are able or willing to speak it.

In any situation, where it is absolutely necessary for the students to understand, such as cases of personal safety, the teacher will speak in English.

Will French Immersion affect my child's social development?

Studies have proven that early immersion students suffer no intellectual, emotional or social impairment.

French Immersion students are generally involved in many activities which promote oral presentation skills and co-operative group work, in order to improve their proficiency in French. This enhances their confidence as well as their social skills.

What kind of French will my child learn?

Your child will learn standard French vocabulary and structures and will be exposed to a variety of accents during his/her school career/

What are the qualifications of a French Immersion teacher?

All teachers in BC must be certified by the BC College of Teachers. In addition, a French Immersion teacher must be bilingual and fluent in French.

Does French Immersion work?

-over 310,000 students are enrolled in French Immersion across Canada

-Ecole Frank Ross' enrollment has increased over the years.

-French Immersion students develop French skills at a level of near native proficiency

-French Immersion students develop English language skills which are at least equal to those of students in English programs

-French Immersion is based on the same natural process children follow in learning their first language

-the performance of French immersion students in Dawson Creek has been consistently strong in relation to provincial and national norms.

What current grade 6 and 7 students have to say about the French Immersion Program

I think it is important to be in the French Immersion Program because it benefits us as we get older. Being bilingual can help you get into better schools and that will help you as you get older. If you want to travel, knowing a second language will help you pick up a third language-Kaitlyn Buck gr.7

It helps us get better jobs and gives you a higher chance of getting into a better college/University-Chase Hartell-gr.7

I think it's important because you need it in the future. I think people should be in French because there are places in the world that people only speak French. So if you want to go somewhere and don't understand the language, it won't be fun. Also, Canada has two languages-English and French and it would be good to know both. It would help you in the future because to get into some universities, you need to be bilingual and to work for the Federal Government you need to know French-Mackenzie Henschel, gr.7

I think it's important to be in French Immersion because it's good for the experience and if you ever wanted to go to France or Quebec you could speak French to the people. Studies have shown that bilingual children learn better than non-bilingual children. It will help my future so if I ever wanted to move to a foreign country like France, then I already know the language and if I want to move to another country, I will learn faster because I already know how to learn another language.-Emily Kadiolka-gr.7

French Immersion would help you in the future because everyone thinks it would be cool to speak a 2nd language. If you enroll your child in French you know they're expanding their life-like to be able to travel to other places and learn more, meet new people, see more shows, read more books. Personally, I think it's one big learning experience-Cody Fonda-gr.6

French Immersion will help me in the future if I wanted to visit Quebec and I went to a store and the guy at the counter can't speak English or something like that. One of the many benefits of French Immersion is that it would be easier to get a job as a cop because the police are looking for bilingual police. Another benefit of being enrolled in French Immersion is that if you wanted to go live in Quebec or France, you would be able to communicate with other people there that could not speak your own primary language.

If you wanted to be an engineer or architect when you grow up, then being bilingual would help by giving you the chance to present your model in Europe-Aaron Glover-gr.6