

French Immersion

FRENCH IMMERSION is a second language program designed for children whose first language is not French and who have little or no knowledge of French prior to entering the program. The goal of French Immersion is to have students at a level of bilingualism sufficient to function in a French environment when they graduate from secondary school.

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Questions & more information

1. What do I want my child to achieve?
2. What approach is used?
3. Is it for my child?
4. At what grade level can my child begin?
5. How will my child react to being in a class where no English is spoken?
6. How important are extra-curricular activities in French?
7. Can I help my child with homework if I don't speak French?
8. Is French Immersion for all children?
9. What about postsecondary education?
10. How do we know Immersion works?
11. What happens if we move and there is no French Immersion?
12. What about help for learning difficulties?
13. Why should I choose French Immersion for my child?
14. What can I do to help?

1. What do I want my child to achieve?

The objective of the French Immersion Program is to develop functionally bilingual students who will:

- have achieved a high proficiency in English;
- have acquired a functional knowledge of the French language to communicate on personal and professional levels;
- demonstrate an appreciation for the French language, and the cultural diversity of the French-speaking world;
- consider that learning French is a tool of personal, intellectual, and social growth;
- be better able to appreciate other languages, cultures, and communities throughout Canada and around the world.

2. What approach is used?

French is used as the language of instruction for a significant part of the day.

In Kindergarten, the language of instruction is totally in French, except when the emotional well-

being of the child warrants the use of English.

From Grade 1 to Grade 6, the subjects are taught mostly in French, for a minimum of 75-80% of total time.

From Grade 7 to Senior 4, some courses are taught in French, for a minimum of 50% of total time.

Extra-curricular activities in French may be used to support the development of language skills outside of the classroom setting.

The language of communication between home and school is English.

3. Is it for my child?

Designed for a child who belongs to the linguistic majority group (English) or whose family heritage is other than French and who aspires to become functionally bilingual.

4. At what grade level can my child begin?

According to the Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program, there are three recognized entry points to the Program: Early Immersion (Kindergarten or Grade 1 entry), Middle Immersion (Grade 4 entry), and Late Immersion (Grade 7 entry).

The majority of schools offer Early Immersion. Few schools offer Late Immersion. Some schools could offer Middle Immersion.

5. How will my child react to being in a class where no English is spoken?

Immersion teachers use many gestures as they speak, so the children are able to follow what is said, even if they do not understand all the words. Children try French words and phrases to communicate with the teacher. They progress at varying rates through the stages of language acquisition. Some will start using French while others are still only using English.

6. How important are extra-curricular activities in French?

The more French-language activities the children can be involved in, the better, to give them everyday experiences in French. Clubs, camps, TV and theatre provide opportunities to learn and use French outside the classroom, with different language models.

7. Can I help my child with homework if I don't speak French?

Most help at home will be in English. Parents can help with Math operations, English spelling, writing and reading. Answering questions, explaining concepts and encouraging good study habits enhance learning in both languages.

8. Is French Immersion for all children?

With few exceptions, Immersion is suitable for all children. Any child who can learn to communicate in one language can acquire a second language through the French Immersion Program.

9. What about College and University?

French Immersion grads have many options. They can study in French or English, at universities in Canada and abroad. Universities recognize French Immersion courses for admission. Scholarships and bursaries are available for study in French in other parts of Canada or abroad.

10. How do we know Immersion works?

Children progress in language learning at different rates but by the end of high school they can speak, read and write French, work or live in a French environment and take post-secondary education in French or in English. Grads have the added benefit of being bilingual and many study other languages, such as Spanish or Italian, which are related to French.

11. What happens if we move and there is no French Immersion?

If Immersion is not available, children do very well in the Basic French program. If they have enrichment opportunities, they will continue to develop their French skills. Students moving into the English program make a smooth transition.

12. What about help for learning difficulties?

Many Immersion schools have bilingual support services who help children with learning difficulties. Research and experiences show that students with a variety of abilities do as well academically as they could in an English program, provided they receive equivalent assistance. Language is not usually the cause of a learning difficulty. The same problems also arise in other educational settings.

13. Why should I choose French Immersion for my child?

Graduates of a full Immersion program have an increased appreciation of other languages and cultures, enhanced career potential and a key to learning other languages. It opens one more door for their future.

14. What can I do to help?

Encourage good study habits and provide French reference materials for use at home. Enjoy French TV, radio, music games, software and videos with your children. Read to and with your children in English. Encourage them to read to you in French. Keep in touch with the teachers. Check out summer camps and exchanges. Visit some French websites together. Try taking a French class yourself. You'll enjoy it!