

French Immersion Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Why learn French in a French Immersion Program?

Recent research on the impact of second language learning demonstrates it will:

- increase cognitive abilities, promoting problem solving, flexibility, and creative thinking.
- enhance knowledge of the first language and improve communication abilities.
- enhance spelling ability as well as reading comprehension.
- promote a higher achievement in a range of subject areas, including Mathematics and Science.
- increase your child's understanding of and respect for other peoples and other cultures.
- help your child to understand more about himself, his country, and his fellow Canadians.
- increase your child's personal pleasures such as the enjoyment of literature, art, music, theatre, travel, and personal relationships.
- give your child a competitive edge in the job market anywhere in Canada and in many other countries.
- help to learn other languages more quickly.

<https://www.caslt.org/files/media/news/Lit-review-Impact-L2-Learning.pdf> (2017)

When and where can my child enter the French Immersion program? The Central Okanagan Public Schools currently offers the following entry points to the French Immersion program:

Westside Family of Schools	Central Family of Schools	Mission Family of Schools	Rutland Family of Schools	Lake Country Family of Schools
École George Pringle K-Grade 1 Early Entry École Hudson Road Grade 4 Middle Entry École Glenrosa Middle Grade 6 Late Entry	École Casorso K-Grade One Early Entry	École Dorothea Walker K-Grade One Early Entry	École Belgo K-Grade One Early Entry	École Peter Greer K-Grade One Early Entry

How is the French Immersion Program funded?

The federal government pays a portion of the costs incurred in French Immersion programs, the Ministry of Education pays the majority of the cost. Once a class is established, the cost per pupil is similar to that in the regular English program.

Who teaches in the French Immersion Program?

In Central Public Schools, French Immersion teachers must be bilingual in French & English, and possess a current BC Teacher's Certificate. Learning Assistance is available to students who are experiencing difficulties in the classroom.

Will my child learn similar things as students in the English program?

All programs, regardless of the language of instruction, must follow the same curriculum laid out by BC Ministry of Education. The BC curriculum framework is available in both English and French at www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca.

How quickly do the children learn to speak French?

Comprehension of spoken French develops first. The ability to speak develops more slowly. In the Early French Immersion program, students start to communicate spontaneously in French by Grade 1. In Middle and Late French Immersion, students are expected to speak with some fluency by the end of the first year of the program.

What level of language competency is reached in French & English?

French Language Competency: In all programs (early, middle and late French Immersion), students achieve a high level of proficiency in French comprehension, speaking, reading and writing.

English Language Competency: For students entering the program in Kindergarten or Grade One, the English language arts component is introduced in Grade Three. By this time, students have learned how to read in French. The decoding skills required for reading in French are usually quickly transferred and applied to the English component of the program.

For students entering the program in Grade Four or Grade Six, the English Language Arts program is re-introduced gradually after initial immersion in French Language.

Is it necessary for my child to know some French before enrolling?

Students are not required to have any background in French prior to entering either the Early or Late French Immersion program.

What can I do to help my child if I don't speak French?

The majority of French Immersion parents don't speak French. But you can still do a lot to support your child in French Immersion! Here's how:

- Demonstrate an ongoing interest, participation, and commitment to your child's education. This provides a child with the necessary guidance and support.
- Concentrate on enriching your child's first language. Read aloud and talk with your child daily in your home language. All acquired reading skills will transfer to French, and vice versa.
- Parents are also encouraged to listen to their child read out loud in French. An older sibling or friend who speaks French can also read to your child.
- Contact the local chapter of Canadian Parents for French (CPF) for ideas on how to seek out ways of reinforcing your child's learning of French outside of school www.cpf.bc.ca

Will my child's English skills suffer?

This question has been studied extensively during the past 25 years, both in Canada and abroad. The conclusion is that, far from hindering English development, knowledge of another language is actually beneficial in improving capabilities in the first language, and increases the ability to learn a third and fourth language.

There may be certain lags in English Language Arts when a child enrolls in an early French immersion program. However, after the introduction of English Language Arts instruction, children quickly catch up to their peers. Studies have shown consistently over the years that, by the end of grade 6, children in immersion programs perform as well as or better than their peers in the regular program. It must not be forgotten that the child is (usually) of English-speaking background, most often living in an English-speaking area. Cultural identity and first language ability is not adversely affected by an immersion program.

If our children are having academic or other problems in French immersion, should we transfer them to the English stream?

Research and experience have shown that children with problems can benefit from a French immersion program. They learn their basic skills at their individual rate, and still acquire competence in French. There are very few instances where transferring a child out of immersion benefits the child.

What happens if my child has learning difficulties in French Immersion?

A child may experience difficulty learning at school, and in French Immersion, for any number of reasons. Initially, the classroom teacher provides additional assistance for students. If this does not address the challenge, then a consultation is usually arranged with the school and family. From there, based on the individual situation, supports will be provided.

Are there enrolment priorities for placing students in the French Immersion program?

- Students who reside within the French Immersion catchment boundaries are accepted into the program first. Although it is first come first serve, and dependent on space, students with siblings within that school are given priority.
- Students who reside outside the French Immersion catchment boundaries are registered after in-catchment students are processed and if space permits.