

French Immersion

Information Package



The Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board

What is French Immersion?

Immersion is the most effective method known for learning a second language. Immersion provides more time working in a second language and more time results in more learning, especially at an age when a young child lacks self-consciousness, prejudice or other negative attitudes. Essentially, children will use the language as a vehicle of expression in other curriculum areas rather than learning about the language in isolation. Our aim is functional bilingualism. This means that at the end of their secondary studies, Immersion students can take further education in a French setting and receive training and employment in French, after some period of adjustment.

Immersion children in a French environment at an early age takes advantage of their natural ability to almost effortlessly acquire a second language, much as they acquired English at home. Indeed, the rate at which they learn to understand spoken French is amazing; as is the native-like pronunciation they quickly develop. Reading and writing skills take considerably longer to develop, of course, just as in their first language.

An earlier beginning in a language results in greater fluency. Research on learning French as a Second Language indicates that a child who enters a program at an early age can more easily acquire French language skills.

Studies of French Immersion programs in other areas show that pupils completing Immersion Kindergarten achieved results on readiness tests similar to those of pupils completing a regular English Kindergarten.

When the performance of Immersion Grade One students is compared to the performance of students in an English Grade One class, their English listening and speaking skills are the same, but their reading ability in English is lower, since the latter skill is not fully introduced until a later grade.

- The following conclusions have been made in research studies:
- The Immersion program leads to the development of French skills, which are superior to those of students in other French language programs.
 - Students in this program quickly catch up to their English educated peers in English Reading skills when they are introduced to formal instruction in English Language Arts in Grades Two, Three or Four levels.
 - The transfer of reading skills, developed in French, is readily achieved when English language arts is introduced

Language learners have to think on their feet. They learn, process and produce in such a regular and immediate way that they become efficient processors of information in all learning situations.

Language learners:

- enjoy words and use them effectively
- can see and create patterns and associations
- can formulate and test hypothesis
- make effective use of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies use clues to grasp the meaning of any situation; develop skills in analysis and application

Second language learning is training in adapting to the unfamiliar, in taking risks and in enjoying change. Research shows that second language learners understand the vital links between people, their language and their culture; have more positive attitudes toward people of diverse culture; are more likely to resist informal or institutional tendencies to stereotype any individual or group; have an enhanced understanding of global issues, including conflicts and potential resolutions

French Immersion FAQ

Do children in French Immersion study the same Curriculum as students in English Classes?

Yes, the Curriculum must follow guidelines of the Ministry of Education. Teachers implement the Ontario Curriculum in all subject areas with the same expectations for French Immersion students as they have for students in the English Classes.

Who should attend?

The French Immersion program is designed for everyone. However, it is important that the child not have any speech, hearing, or perceptual problems in order to have a successful experience in the program. In the best interests of the student, additional conditions for success include a maturity of his/her first language, especially in structure and vocabulary, as well as a good listening ability. If it is found that a child, for the above reasons, may not benefit from this program, parents will be counseled against placing the child in the program.

During much of the first year, in this type of program, most of the children will continue to speak English to each other and to their teacher; whenever possible, the teacher will respond in French as a way of modeling communications for the students. However, after grade 1, students are expected use to French as the primary language for communications in the classroom.

What areas of the curriculum are taught in French?

In Grade one through Grade 3, 75% of the curriculum will be taught in French in order to provide the maximum opportunity for expression and communication; those areas include French Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Math and Music and Physical Education. The subjects to be taught during the time set aside for instruction in English will be Religious Education and introduction to English literacy.

In grades 4, 5 & 6, students continue to be taught in French for approximately 70% of the regular school day. Religious Education is taught in English and the formal teaching of English as a subject is expanded.

In grades 7 & 8, students are taught in French for approximately 50% of the regular school day. French Language Arts, History and Geography, and one other subject are usually taught in French; for the other half of the day, Religion, Mathematics and the balance of the other courses are taught in English. Every attempt is made to construct a timetable which will allow for the day to be divided into an English half and a French half. If a child is in need of extra help in French, the classroom teacher will provide assistance in consultation with the In-School Team.

Entry Points

The Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board has two entry points for pupils beginning an Early French Immersion Program. For students who enroll in the program at Formosa and Port Elgin, the entry point is Grade 1. For pupils who attend schools in Kincardine and Owen Sound, the entry point is Kindergarten.

Grade Level Language

Kindergarten JK/SK	French 90%	English 10%
Grade 1	French 75%	English 25%
Grade 2	French 75%	English 25%
Grade 3	French 75%	English 25%
Grade 4	French 70%	English 30%
Grade 5	French 70%	English 30%
Grade 6	French 70%	English 30%
Grade 7	French 50%	English 50%
Grade 8	French 50%	English 50%

Who teaches the program?

The Immersion teacher is bilingual, either because his/her first language is French or because he/she has acquired native-like fluency in French. But foremost, these teachers will be classroom teachers who have experience with children in the primary, junior, intermediate, and senior divisions. The children should view immersion teachers as French speakers. Otherwise, they will not feel the need to communicate in French.

What type of accent will my child have?

Standard French vocabulary and structures are taught. Although a variety of accents exist in all languages, teachers will all speak Standard or International French. As they progress through several years of Immersion, children will be exposed to teachers from various parts of the world that are models of well-spoken French.

What if other children in the family are not in Immersion?

If the family recognizes that different programs are equally valid for each child then those problems should not be a major concern. Often, a younger child in Immersion stimulates an interest in French for the whole family.

Will French Immersion affect my child's social development?

Studies have shown that Immersion programs do not cause undue intellectual, emotional and social stress on children. While children in Immersion might tend to associate more with Immersion classmates outside the classroom, this is typical of all children.

Does it matter if parents cannot speak French at home?

No! What is important is that parents should try to be positive at all times about the program, the teacher and school. Express any questions or concerns you might have to the teacher or principal. Do encourage your child to watch some French television. Don't attempt to correct your child if you are uncertain of the exact pronunciation. If your child is eager to speak French at home, encourage him/her but do not make it a chore.

What additional supports are available?

Students who may experience some difficulty with the curriculum will have the support of the In-School Team, which meets with classroom teachers to plan strategies and provide resources to help students to succeed. Resource support, when required, is delivered in English; however, the In-School Team can recommend strategies for support, which may be implemented by the classroom teacher in French. If it is judged that the needs of a student cannot be met in the French Immersion program, the principal will recommend to the parents that the child transfer to the English language program.

What about the EQAO assessments in Grades 3, 6 and 10?

Students in French Immersion are considered by the Ministry of Education to be English language students studying French as a second language. The students are required to write the EQAO assessments for grades 3, 6 and 10 in English. Our experience has been that the students usually do as well as, and sometimes better than, their peers in the English language program.

Where can you learn more?

If you would like to learn more about French Immersion, we

invite you to call the school that your son or daughter would attend. The Principal will be pleased to answer your questions; in fact, you will probably be invited to visit the school and be offered the opportunity to visit some classes. Our schools are proud of the programs they offer and welcome the opportunity to not only talk to you about them but also to have you observe them.

French Immersion Kindergarten

- The French immersion program is designed for non-French-speaking children. Communication with parents, i.e., report cards and newsletters will be in English.
- Prepare your child for school just as you would if he or she were entering an English-speaking classroom.
- Help your child learn such skills as managing jacket and shoes, and prepare him or her to be comfortable spending time away from you.
- The full day, every other day Kindergarten program offers 90% in French and 10% in English. The religion program is thought in English, the program materials and parent communications you receive will be ones you and your child will be able to read together.
- Your child's teacher will help your child understand French by showing pictures, making drawings and using gestures and actions. Very soon, your child will understand and be able to use some French words! Encourage and praise your child's efforts to use French.
- Your child will learn through play at learning stations where there are many ways to explore: drawing and painting, looking at colorful pictures in books, objects to experiment with in sand and water, puzzles, construction and early reading, writing and mathematics activities.
- Your child will be learning French along with other children—becoming friends as they play and learn together
- There will be time for snacks, indoor exercise and outdoor activities.

You can encourage your child to talk about his or her day in kindergarten:

- What new French word did you learn today?
- What learning station did you go to today?
- Who did you play with today?
- Can you tell me about the story you heard today?

The Kindergarten curriculum expectations are outlined in the document "The Kindergarten Program" from the Ministry of Education: curriculum

areas are language, mathematics, science & technology, personal & social development and the arts. As well, this document provides information on learning through play and inquiry, and describes the roles of teacher and parent, the learning environment and children's individual needs.

- Learning in Kindergarten is expected to be integrated and holistic. "Children grasp ideas more easily and more effectively and maintain their interest in school when they have an educational program that is integrated ... Kindergarten programs should emphasize the interconnected learning that occurs when children are exposed to real-life situations and activities in the classroom, home, school and neighborhood. For example a trip to the grocery store can develop literacy, numeracy and social skills, and can provide an opportunity to acquire nutritional information."
- French immersion kindergarten is the first step on your child's journey to acquiring another language at the level of functional fluency, and an appreciation of French culture. A gentle approach is used in introducing French in kindergarten, through activities that gradually build basic language structures and vocabulary. Because listening skills are so important for acquisition of language in general, you can help all year long by encouraging these skills at home: for example, during supper time conversations, or when your child is helping with household activities such as baking (talking about recipe instructions) or tidying up after play.
- One important way to help is by ensuring your child's good health: rest, nutritious food, and physical activity.
- Research has shown that learning in a second language is not a major source of frustration or difficulty for young children. (See the CPF publication "So you want your child to learn French" 1990.) Regular communication with your child's teacher is important so that you may address any areas of concern early on.

Your role as a parent is vitally important in the education of your child, as the first and primary educator, both in faith and academics. It is a role that is respected and welcomed.

For Kindergarten curriculum documents, visit the Ontario Ministry of Education site at www.edu.gov.on.ca