

# French Immersion: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers

## Part A

### What is French Immersion?

## Part B

### My child is in French Immersion; how can I support them?



# Part A: What is French Immersion?

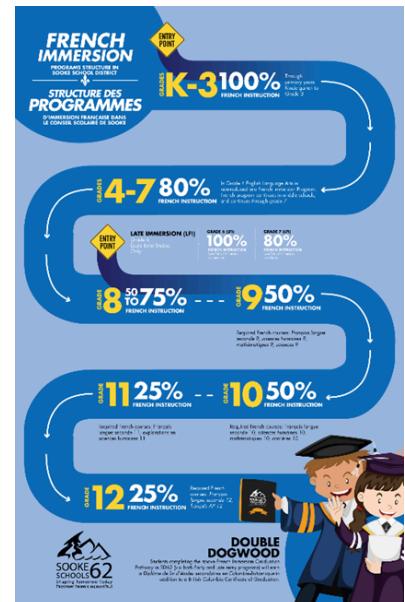
## French Immersion Program goals and outcomes at a glance

French Immersion is a French language-learning program available to all students in SD62. French Immersion is designed for non-French-speaking students who wish to attain a high level of proficiency in both of Canada's official languages. Students achieve a level of learning in all curricular areas equivalent to that achieved by students in English programming.

Recognizing and acknowledging the rich heritage and diversity of French worldwide, students in French Immersion will receive instruction and gain familiarity in a variety of French cultures and dialects over the span of their schooling. Students meaningfully experience both French language and French cultures within the classroom, and instruction takes place in French, with both teachers and students primarily communicating in French daily. Our goal is for French Immersion learners to experience a well-rounded education while becoming bilingual in a manner that goes beyond purely functional but rather fosters global citizens capable in both French and English. (PONC, 2011, p.15)

All French Immersion programs begin with 100% French instruction in all subject areas. The percentage of French in each subject area gradually decreases as learners move into the secondary years, allowing for flexibility of course selection while providing for consistency of language learning and development of French proficiency in each of the academic areas.

Grade	% of French Instruction	% of English Instruction
K-(2 or 3)	100	0
(3 or) 4-7	80	20
8-10	50 - 75	25 - 50
11-12	no less than 25	no more than 75



<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/public-schools/french-immersion-program>

<https://www.sd62.bc.ca/programs-supports/french-programs>

# French Immersion Schools:

Students residing in School District 62- Sooke may enroll for the French Immersion program. There are two entry points:

## Early French Immersion (Kindergarten):

- École John Stubbs Memorial (Grade K-5)
- École Poirier Elementary (Grade K-5)
- École Millstream Elementary (Grade K-5)

## Late French Immersion (Grade 6):

- École John Stubbs Memorial (Grade 6-8)
- Journey Middle School (Grade 6-8)
  - Please note bussing is only available in the student catchment area. Please refer to the district catchment guide

Program	Entry Point	Grades
Early French Immersion	Kindergarten (and Grade 1)	K-12
Late French Immersion	Grade 6	6-12

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/public-schools/french-immersion-program>

*Please note that both programs are subject to a lottery as registration exceed available seats (the lottery follows enrolment priorities).*

## Is French Immersion right for my child?

The French Immersion Program welcomes a diverse range of learners. Students who are often successful in French Immersion are those who delight in language play and display an interest in acquiring new vocabulary. They engage deeply in stories, conversations, and activities, adapt to new or unfamiliar situations with positive coping strategies, and self-advocate when help is needed. They might have a natural curiosity, and a positive attitude towards learning.

Registering for French Immersion is a long-term commitment. It means that the language at home may be different than French, and that your child's assignments, texts and entertainment may be in a language that is unfamiliar to you. Consequently, we recognize that you and your family are making a big commitment to support your child through their French Immersion journey.

Most importantly, students tend to have more opportunities to be successful when they receive positive reinforcement about learning another language from both their friends and their family/ caregivers. If they perceive that there is value in learning another language, they are more likely to persevere during times when the learning is challenging. Furthermore, should your child struggle in learning French, we encourage open discussion at home and with school staff to explore supports available.

## What are the benefits of French Immersion?

There are a wide range of academic, professional, and cultural benefits to the French Immersion program. Studies have demonstrated that acquiring another language not only reinforces proficiency in one's primary language but also fosters broader cognitive development. This includes sharpening problem-solving and reasoning abilities, nurturing creative thinking, and fostering greater cultural sensitivity and appreciation. As language proficiency grows, so does adaptability to new circumstances, often accompanied by enhanced memory and attention span. Moreover, multilingualism facilitates improved communication in academic, professional, and global settings, empowering students to engage more effectively in various contexts (*based on information found in The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language and the French Immersion: Guide for Parents and Caregivers from Durham District School Board*)

## Responsibilities and expectations of the program

The French Immersion program is an enriching experience for students. Along with this opportunity comes responsibility on behalf of the student. As a language learner, the students should:

- Participate actively, take risks, and engage consistently in reading, speaking and writing in French
- Recognize that language-learning takes patience and time, and is most often successful when participation is daily and sustained over time

Home life plays an important role in student learning. Students experience more success when receiving support outside of school as they acquire and develop their French language skills.

You can support your child in French Immersion by:

Offering and encouraging your child to read French books, listen to audiobooks, play video games, watch movies, listen to radio in French, and exploring French culture when the opportunities arise. *Note: There are a variety of resources and online platforms that can help accomplish this. Please see below for a list of district available resources to support students learning at home.*

- Showing your support for French Immersion in general. Children often take cues from their parents and guardians, and if you are hesitant or unsure this may influence your child's outlook and commitment to the program.
- Encouraging your child to reflect on their learning by asking them about their day.
- Have your child continue to explore French at home as little as 5 – 10 minutes a day is beneficial. Establishing and, whenever possible, sticking to a daily routine with a consistent location and schedule often works best.

Taking an active role at school and engaging with the language at home will reinforce their vocabulary and promote self-confidence. Your curiosity and commitment as parents or caregivers set the tone for your child.

If you have wonders or concerns about your child's progress in French Immersion, you can:

- Communicate your concerns, questions or suggestions with teachers or the Principal/Vice-Principal at the school
- Volunteer to help at the school or in the classroom
- Regularly check in with your child about their learning and assignments

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

Yes. All programs, regardless of the language of instruction, must follow BC's provincial curriculum. The curriculum for each subject area is available in both English and French at [www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca](http://www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca). Materials in French cover the same content, curricular competencies, and target the same academic and social goals as English materials. Research and Ministry data indicate that French Immersion and Francophone students tend to perform on provincial assessments at least as well as students in other education programs.”

*(Learning in French Together: Frequently Asked Questions for Parents/Guardians)*

## **Will learning in French impact my child's ability to progress in English, both with reading and writing in English and with their academics?**

Studies have demonstrated that acquiring another language not only reinforces proficiency in one's primary language but also fosters broader cognitive development (*Frequently Asked Questions for Parents/Guardians*).

*\*See “What are the Benefits of French Immersion” for additional benefits p. 4*

# **Will my child fall behind in their English language compared to other kids in the English program?**

Avoid comparing your child with children in the English program. Learning two languages simultaneously (Bilingualism) is unique for each person and takes time. A bilingual child is learning two languages at once and therefore learns at a different rate to those learning their academics in their primary language. French Immersion students will catch up to their peers over time.

# **My child has a learning difficulty, should I move them to the English program so that they are learning solely in English?**

Studies have shown that students in French Immersion with diverse abilities or who experience learning challenges, will often continue to have the same struggles in English (Arnett, 2013a; Bourgoin 2016). Students in French Immersion also have learning supports in place for their learning.

Maintaining ongoing open discussion at home and with school staff about the child's needs will support a successful French Immersion pathway.

# **Do parents need to speak French?**

No, however parents should be involved in their child's learning and learn alongside them. Creating a positive atmosphere around the language will help students feel a sense of belonging and identity.

# **Can I try out French Immersion for a year or two?**

French Immersion requires a considerable commitment. If caregivers choose to withdraw their child from the program, re-entry will not be possible due to the Ministry of Education's policy, which limits entry points to Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Late French Immersion in Grade 6.

# **Can my child join French Immersion in grade 1?**

Yes, if spaces are available.

# Can my child enroll in French Immersion if English is not their primary language?

Yes. The program is designed for non-French speaking students and can be beneficial for students whose first language is not English as it creates equal footing with peers. In French Immersion, all students are learning French as a new language, which can create a more level playing field for non-native English speakers compared to English-only classrooms. Parents should carefully consider their child's individual needs and the specific programs available in their area when making this decision.



*Stock images from Canva*



# Part B: My child is in French Immersion; how can I support them?

## Ways that you can enhance your child's French Immersion experience:

- Join Canadian Parents for French. CPF membership is free, and offers many resources for parents and guardians, including French courses for parents. Parents can learn alongside their child, enhancing the experience for both. French courses for parents are also available at <https://www.sfvictoria.ca/>
- Encourage your child to watch and listen to shows in French with subtitles. (Eg. Ici Radio Canada; Zone jeunesse, Zone petits )
- Access available French resources in your area

Whenever possible, read with your child. One of the most important ways to support student learning is by reading in both English and French. Follow these helpful tips to bring French language reading into your home:

- Use online platforms such as Sora ([soraapp.com](https://soraapp.com)) to find books to read or listen to in both languages
- Even if you are not able to read in French, have your child read to you and explain what it is about
- Read books together and ask questions or discuss what is happening in the story
- If reading in French, here are some key differences in word pronunciation that may help when you come across new or challenging words:
  - Consonants are mostly the same in both languages
  - Vowels are significantly different between languages
  - **H** is always silent in French
  - An **s** at the end of a word, when it is used to indicate the plural, often is silent
  - **Qu** sounds like **k** (not “kw” as in quiet but as in “kin”)
  - **Th** is pronounced like **t**
  - **Ch** is pronounced like **sh** in English
  - **I** is pronounced like the long English **e** (as in the word “see”)
  - **Ou** in French sounds like **oo** in English (as in the word “troop”)
  - **Oi** sounds like **wa** (as in the word “wash”)
  - **Au** and **eau** sound like the English long **o** (as in “go”)
  - **Ez** sounds like the English long **a** (as in say)

- Accents change the sound of vowels:
  - è sounds like the English short e (as in “peck”)
  - é sounds like the English long a (as in “say”)
  - ê sounds like the English short e (as in “peck”)
  - ç sounds like the English s sound (as in “sand”)

(adapted from *French Immersion Handbook for Parents and Yes, You Can Help*)

- For additional French sound support, see Simon Fraser University's [Beginner's French – French Sounds Support](#)

- Volunteer opportunities:

- in child's classroom
- with book exchange
- participate as a guest speaker in the classroom

## Resources to support students at home:

- **District Resources:**

- Sora Student Reading application: Access audio and digital books through the Sora application. Each student has a district account and can log in at school or from home by going to [www.soraapp.com/welcome](http://www.soraapp.com/welcome)
- BC Digital Classroom: Access databases, magazines, and articles with French content. Ask your student's teacher for the password to access from home.  
<https://focusedresources.ca/en/digital-classroom-access>
- Je lis, je lis for classroom teachers K-7
- French-language version of National Film Board (NFB/ONF) resources  
<https://www.onf.ca/>

- **Public Library:**

- We encourage parents to request a public library card for their child. Services offered by the public library include access to French resources such as books, music, movies, and more. With a public library card, students can also access many online resources as well.
- There are two public libraries in our school district demographic:
  - Vancouver Island Regional Library (Sooke) <https://virl.bc.ca/get-help/get-a-card/>
  - Greater Victoria Public Library (Westshore)  
[https://gvpl.ent.sirsidynix.net/client/en\\_US/default/?rm=GET+A+LIBRARY+0%7C%7C%7C1%7C%7C%7C0%7C%7C%7Ctrue](https://gvpl.ent.sirsidynix.net/client/en_US/default/?rm=GET+A+LIBRARY+0%7C%7C%7C1%7C%7C%7C0%7C%7C%7Ctrue)

- **Online resources:**

- L 'École ouverte: Learning resources proposed by the Québec Ministry of Education <https://ecoleouverte.ca/fr/parents>
- La souris: Various types of French reading resources and reading comprehension activities <https://www.lasouris-web.org/primaire/francais-lecture.htm>
- Storybooks Canada: Stories are read aloud to students (in French) on this Canadian website. Words are highlighted as read, so that students can follow along <https://www.storybookscanada.ca/stories/fr/>
- TFO <https://www.tfo.org/>
- Mini TFO <https://www.tfo.org/minitfo>
- Ici Tou.TV <https://ici.tou.tv/>
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