Yes You Can Help!

Information and Inspiration for Parents of French Immersion Students

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Introduction

You *can* help your child in French immersion!

Like other parents, you want to take an active role in your child's learning. If you've chosen French immersion for your child, you may have some questions and require information on how to support your child in a language program.

Recognizing the need to provide parents with clear and complete information about French immersion, Alberta Education's French Language Education Services and the Alberta Branch of Canadian Parents for French (CPF) collaborated to produce *Yes, You Can Help!* in 1996.

The popularity of the resource among both parents and educators in Alberta inspired the publication of a national edition in 2002. In 2011 the information was again updated, and is now available to all parents through the Alberta Education website.

Yes, You Can Help! is designed as a reference and guide. We hope it will help you put the "French" part of your child's education into perspective.

How to use *Yes, You Can Help!*

Much has been discovered about teaching and learning a second language since the inception of French immersion in 1965. *Yes, You Can Help!* is a summary of the information now available. At the end of most sections is a segment called "For more information" where you will find links to additional resources.

Furthermore, throughout the resource you will also find hotlinks to references about specific items.

Be sure to add *Yes, You Can Help!* to your Internet "favourites" so you can quickly refer to it whenever a question arises or your child enters a new stage of his or her education.

What do all those terms mean?

Terms related to French language learning

It is not unusual to find different terms used in different parts of the country for the same education concept. For example, “continuing immersion” is called “post immersion,” “secondary immersion,” or even “extended French.” Here’s a guide to the French education terminology most commonly used across Canada.

French programs

core French	French taught as a subject for one period each day or a few times a week. This may begin at any time from Kindergarten to Grade 10 (depending on the local school board). The objective is to provide students with a basic knowledge of French (the depth of this knowledge will vary according to the length and intensity of the program) and an interest in and appreciation of French culture.
extended core	A program in which one or two subjects (e.g., social studies, physical education) are taught in French in addition to core French. The core French program may begin at the same time as or precede the extended core program by several years. The objective of this additional exposure to French is to increase the students’ French language skills.
French first language (FFL)	A program taught in French for Francophone students (that is, children who have at least one Francophone parent, as defined in Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms). The objective is full mastery of French as a mother tongue, full fluency in English, and a sense of identity with and belonging to the Francophone community.
French as a second language (FSL)	A term most often used to include all programs meant to teach French to non-Francophone children (that is, all variations of core French and immersion)
French immersion	A program in which French is the language of instruction for a significant part of the school day; that is, several or all subjects except English language arts are taught in French. Immersion is designed for students whose first language is not French. The objective is full mastery of the English language, functional fluency in French, as well as an understanding and appreciation of French culture. As with core French, the expected outcome in terms of mastery of French is directly related to the total amount of exposure to and use of the language.
intensive French	An enrichment of the core French program by the creation (usually in Grade 5 or 6) of a five-month period of intensive study and use of French, while the regular curriculum is “compressed” into the remainder of that school year. The objective is to increase the students’ French language skills.

What do all those terms mean?

French immersion programs

early	A program beginning in Kindergarten or Grade 1
middle	A program beginning in grades 3, 4 or 5
late	A program beginning in Grade 6 or later, usually but not necessarily after a few years of core French
continuing	Refers to the continuation at the secondary level of any of the above programs
total	An immersion program which for the first few years utilizes French from 75% to 100% of class time. English language arts may be introduced in grades 1, 2, 3, or 4. Even if the relative amount of French decreases significantly in later grades, the early intensive exposure to it gives this program its name.
partial	A program which has less than 75% but at least 50% of class time with French as the language of instruction (less than 50% is considered to be "extended core"). English language arts is part of the curriculum from the beginning.

Schools offering French programs

dual track	A school in which French immersion exists alongside another language program/alongside other language programs
immersion centre	A school (single track, uni-track) in which only French immersion is accommodated
Francophone school	One offering French first language education
triple- or multi-track	A school with three or more programs (e.g., English, early immersion, and late immersion)

Other terms you may encounter

There are many other terms that you may encounter during the course of your child's education, whether he or she is in a French immersion or English program.

additive bilingualism	The result of acquiring a second language in a way that does not have a negative impact on the individual's first language (see "subtractive bilingualism")
Advanced Placement Program	An internationally-recognized high school program of intense study which allows successful students to enter second-year university courses at participating postsecondary institutions. The available courses include French.

What do all those terms mean?

Allophone	A person whose native or principal language is neither English nor French
Anglophone	A person whose native or principal language is English
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)	A condition in which the individual is unable to focus, is very easily distracted, interrupts frequently, talks excessively (an individual with ADD may be, but is not necessarily, hyperactive)
aural	Related to hearing
CÉGEP	*Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel*—a college program in Quebec which follows high school and leads to either university entrance or the job market
child-centred	Focusing on the needs of the individual child (This term often describes a certain kind of educational practices; see also "teacher-centred".)
cognition	The mental processes by which knowledge is acquired
combined class	See "multi-grade class"
cooperative learning	Learning accomplished by working in small groups on a common task
dictée	An integrative test involving listening as well as writing (spelling). Because in French many words change according to the context (for example, the spelling of an adjective will change to agree with the gender and number of the modified noun), it is traditional for French spelling exercises to involve whole sentences rather than word lists.
differentiated instruction	A philosophy and an approach to teaching in which teachers and school communities actively work to support the learning of all students through strategic assessment, thoughtful planning and targeted, flexible instruction
diverse learners	Students whose learning is affected by their different experiential, behavioural, communicative, intellectual, or physical characteristics
dyslexia	A learning disability characterized by difficulty with word recognition and often by poor spelling resulting from difficulties in connecting letters and sounds in order to decode written language (note: Most reading difficulties are not due to dyslexia.)
elementary	Referring to the first half of a student's grade-school education, from Kindergarten to around Grade 6
fine motor skills	The ability to use small muscle groups (e.g., to thread a string through holes or to write)
Francophone	A person whose native or principal language is French

What do all those terms mean?

Francophile	A non-Francophone who shows particular interest in and liking for the language, culture and aspirations of French-speaking Canadians
gifted and talented students	Students capable of exceptional performance in one or more areas of endeavour such as academics, creative or productive thinking, leadership, visual and performing arts or athletics
grammar	The rules governing the correct use of words within a sentence
gross motor skills	The ability to use large muscle groups (e.g., to walk or to catch a ball)
hyperactivity	Excessive gross motor activity (such as running, climbing or an agitation that makes somebody unable to sit still) which is often haphazard, poorly organized, and not goal-directed
inclusion	Admitting every student into the school community by placing each one in the setting that is best for him or her at a particular time
inclusive education	Schooling that meets the learning needs of all students, including those with diverse learning needs, so that all students have a place, feel valued and welcomed, and are equipped for success
interference	The result of incorrectly applying the rules or structures of one language to another language
International Baccalaureate	An internationally-recognized two-year pre-university program for highly-motivated, academically-oriented secondary students
language arts	The subject which focuses on listening, reading, speaking, viewing and writing
learning disabilities	Deficiencies in the cognitive processing of information via mechanisms such as attention, perception or memory. Learning disabilities are found in children of average and above-average intelligence and remain into adulthood.
metacognition	An individual's conscious awareness of the ways in which he or she learns
metalinguistic	Having to do with an individual's conscious awareness of the ways in which language works and the ability to manipulate language in the service of thinking and problem-solving
mother tongue	First language a child learns at home and still understands
multi-grade class, multi-aging	A class that includes students from more than one grade level
oral	Related to speaking
peer tutoring	The practice of students assisting other students

What do all those terms mean?

phonics	The principles that describe the relationships between sounds and the printed letters and symbols of language
secondary	Referring to the second half of a student's grade-school education, from around Grade 7 to graduation
semantic	Having to do with the meanings of words
split class	See "multi-grade class"
subtractive bilingualism	The result of acquiring the socially-dominant language in a way that undermines and perhaps even replaces the individual's first language
syntax	The way in which words are used to form sentences, clauses or phrases
teacher-centred	Centred on teacher preferences rather than individual students' needs and learning styles (This term usually describes a certain kind of educational practices; see also "child-centred".)
transfer/transference	Applying the knowledge and skills learned in one language to a situation in which another language is used
whole language	An approach in which ideas are first introduced as a whole, after which specific language structures are taught in context and lessons are geared to meet the interests and needs of individual students. Whole language does not exclude the explicit teaching of grammar, spelling or phonics, but this instruction is undertaken in such a way that the student understands its relevance, via teaching techniques best suited to the child.

Why learn another language?

Consider the many advantages!

When making educational choices for their children, parents recognize that knowing a second language is an important skill in today's ever-shrinking world—and will be even more important in their children's future.

Knowing another language can:

- enhance your child's personal pleasures such as the enjoyment of literature, art, music, theatre, travel and personal relationships;
- increase your child's understanding of and respect for other peoples and other cultures;
- help your child to understand more about himself or herself, their country and their fellow Canadians;
- give your child access to a larger pool of information and to more educational and career opportunities;
- give your child a competitive edge in the job market anywhere in Canada and in many other countries.

The process of learning another language can also:

- develop your child's listening and learning skills as well as his or her self-discipline;
- increase your child's cognitive abilities, making him or her a more flexible and creative thinker;[1]
- enhance your child's knowledge of his or her first language and improve their ability to communicate in it;[2]
- make learning a third or fourth language much easier for your child.[3]

Life-long use of two or more languages:

- reduces the normal effects of aging on some brain functions;[4]
- has been shown to significantly delay the onset of symptoms of dementia.[5]

Why learn French?

French is the natural second language for many Canadians because it is so widely used and accessible throughout the country.[6] With French we have the advantage of:

- texts, references and library books as well as Internet sites prepared for the Francophone market;
- large numbers of French-speaking teachers;

Why learn another language?

- access to role models and activities in Francophone communities as well as access to the French media;
- sufficient interest in the language to support viable programs;
- developing an appreciation for Canada's official languages and cultural identity.

French is relatively easy for English speakers to learn because of the close historical relationship between the two languages. Their alphabets and sentence structures are very similar. Many English words come from French or from Latin, a common root of both languages.

A knowledge of Canada's two official languages helps children to better understand the history, development and politics of their own country.

French is spoken by about 220 million people around the world. The Organisation internationale de la Francophonie involves 75 states and governments. French is an official working language of the European Economic Community, the United Nations, the International Red Cross, the International Olympic Committee, NATO, and many other organizations.

This is not to ignore other languages. Research in education has shown that mastery of a second language can make it easier to learn a third and a fourth. Once a second language has been acquired, "the sky's the limit!"

See What have graduates said about French immersion?

For more information

Benefits of Second Language Learning, Alberta Education

I Want to Become Bilingual Because (video), Canadian Parents for French, revised 2009

Proud of Two Languages (video), Canadian Parents for French, 2009

Survey of Supervisors of Bilingual Employees, Canadian Parents for French, 2008

Your Future, Your Career, Alberta Education

Notes

[1] Lazaruk, W. "Linguistic, Academic, and Cognitive Benefits of French Immersion." *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63, 5, August 2007, pp. 605–627.

[2] See What about their English?

Why learn another language?

[3] "We have found that an Anglophone who already speaks French will find it easier than a unilingual Anglophone to learn not only a Latin language but also such very different languages as Arabic or even Mandarin. … The well-known psychological barrier simply disappears after learning a second Language; hence the importance of bilingualism." Sandro d'Addario, Director General of Berlitz Language Centres of Canada, as quoted in "Bilingual? Why Not Trilingual?" Gilles LaFramboise. *Language and Society*, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 39, 1992, p. 32.

[4] Bialystok, E., F.I.M. Craik, R. Klein. and M. Viswanathan. "Bilingualism, Aging, and Cognitive Control: Evidence from the Simon Task." *Psychology and Aging*, 19, 2, 2004, pp. 290–303.

[5] Craik, F.I.M., E. Bialystock and M. Freedman. "Delaying the Onset of Alzheimer's Disease: Bilingualism as a Form of Cognitive Reserve." *Neurology* 75, 19, November 9, 2010, pp. 1726–1729. Retrieved March 10, 2011 from http://www.neurology.org/content/75/19/1726.

[6] 22.3% of Canadians have French as a mother tongue. More than a million Francophones live outside the province of Quebec. (Statistics Canada, 2006 census)

A made-in-Canada solution!

How did French immersion start?

French immersion has been described as "the great Canadian experiment that worked."[1] As with all great innovations, it was created to fulfil a need and driven by those with a vision.

In the early 1960s, Anglophone parents across the country began pointing to their poor knowledge of French as proof that the French courses being offered in most English school systems in Canada were not working. They began to demand improved opportunities for their children to learn Canada's other official language through publicly-funded school systems.

By far the best known early experiment[2] in French immersion began in 1965 when, after a two-year struggle, twelve parents calling themselves the St. Lambert Bilingual School Study Group received permission from their reluctant school board to begin a French immersion kindergarten. This small group believed that their children could learn French as a living language without harm to their competence in English. They also had the good sense to insist that the new program be carefully studied.

As encouraging research results were released by McGill University beginning in 1969, the word spread quickly and parent committees in other communities began to demand French immersion programs for their children. By 1977, a nationwide support group called Canadian Parents for French had formed and become a major catalyst in the spread of this new concept in second-language education. For more information on this topic, see Historical overview of French immersion and French language instruction in Alberta.

Today, parents continue to be the major driving force behind French immersion—enrolling their children, supporting their children and their schools, helping with extracurricular activities, monitoring program quality and promoting the program with governments, school boards, other parents and the public.

From 30 to 330,000

What began with a classroom of about 30 students in one community grew rapidly during the '70s and '80s. Over a period of about 15 years (from 1977 to 1992), French immersion enrolments increased across Canada by more than 650%! Today, French immersion is the program of choice for some 330,000 students[3] in hundreds of large cities and small towns from St. John's to Port Alberni to Inuvik.[4]

In the 2009-10 school year, French immersion was available in almost 50 Alberta communities. It was offered by 28 public school districts, 13 separate school districts, and 3 private schools to almost 35,000 students.

A Canadian export

Canadian researchers, educators and parent groups have gained respect worldwide and are often called upon to share their experiences and knowledge about learning a language the "immersion way." Today there are Canadian-style immersion programs in many countries, including Australia, Finland, Hong Kong, Singapore, Spain, and the United States.

A made-in-Canada solution!

What are the goals of French immersion?

French immersion is a highly successful approach to second-language learning—an effective way for your child to become functionally fluent in a second language while achieving all of the objectives of the regular school program.

The goals of French immersion are:

- to enable students to achieve a level of competence in English equivalent to the level achieved by English program students within three years of beginning instruction in English, and to maintain that equivalency through Grade 12;
- to enable students to achieve the prescribed learner outcomes in all subjects studied;
- to enable students to become functionally fluent in French by the end of Grade 12, that is, to be able:
- to participate easily and willingly in conversations in French,
- to communicate in French for both personal and professional needs,
- to pursue their postsecondary education in French,
- to accept employment where French is the language of work;
- to enable students to gain an understanding and appreciation of Francophone cultures.

Language learning is a lifelong experience

How well we learn even our first language is influenced not only by our schooling, but also by our experiences, maturity and the opportunities we have throughout our lives to hear, read and use language in all its forms—oral, written, casual, formal, etc. The linguistic situation in which we live, that is fashioned by the language and culture most prevalent in the community, workplace and media, is also an important factor. For example, Francophones growing up in the predominantly English-speaking parts of the country find it difficult to achieve and maintain full fluency in French because of the strong influence of the English milieu in their daily lives. On the other hand, people in many other countries more easily acquire second, third and fourth languages because of the opportunities to hear and use them within their communities.

The basic characteristics of immersion

Designed specifically for children whose first language is not French, is based on a very simple concept: if you can't take the child to the language (that is, have him live where the language is the common means of communication), then bring the language to the child (that is, bring it into the school as the primary means of communication).

A made-in-Canada solution!

The basic characteristics of the program

There are six characteristics which define immersion programs:

1. the target language is acquired primarily by using it for meaningful communication within the school—that is, for instruction in other subjects (math, social studies, science, etc.);
2. the students begin not knowing the target language, and instructional strategies and materials are designed with that in mind;
3. the target language is not the prevalent language of the community;
4. the program begins with intensive instruction in and via the target language by teachers fluent in that language, with instruction via English often increasing in later years;
5. instruction on subject material is never repeated in the two languages;
6. the program objectives are intended to be achieved by end of Grade 12.

Some authorities also note the strong role of parents in establishing and supporting immersion as a fundamental feature of the program.[5]

What does French immersion look like?

There are now many kinds of immersion programs, with different beginning points and relative amounts of instruction in French and English. Whether you're reading about research results or hearing anecdotal reports, you should clarify exactly what sort of immersion program is being discussed.

Early immersion begins in Kindergarten or Grade 1. English language arts may be introduced as a subject in Grade 1, 2, 3 or 4, with Grade 3 being the most common choice. Across Canada, the amount of instruction in French ranges from 50% to 100% for the first few years of school and from 50% to 80% in the upper elementary grades. By grades 10 to 12, the range is even greater, from just one subject (French language arts) in French to most subjects being taught in French.

Middle immersion begins in Grade 4 or 5, with anything from 50% to 100% of instruction being in French.

Late immersion most often begins in Grade 6 or 7. Again, the proportion of instruction in French can differ widely from place to place.

Alberta's Guide to Education recommends the following percentages of time to support the goals of French immersion:

Kindergarten	100%
Grades 1–2	90% – 100%
Grades 3–6	70% – 80%
Grades 7–9	50% – 80%
Grades 10–12	40% – 80%

In all other aspects, immersion programs follow the same curriculum as the regular English program. Each province's or territory's goals of education apply to all students, regardless of the language of instruction.

Who is the program for?

French immersion is a program of choice, open to all children of the appropriate age.

With few exceptions, there are no selection criteria and no special fees for registration in early immersion (except in the case of private schools). Public information meetings and program announcements encourage all parents to consider the program for their children. On the other hand, students interested in middle or late immersion may sometimes be required to meet specified academic standards or obtain a teacher's recommendation.

Isn't it for Francophones?

Students of Francophone heritage have different linguistic, educational, cultural and personal identity needs from those learning French as a second or additional language. French first language (FFL) schools as recognized in Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms are available to children of Francophone parents in all nine provinces where French is the minority language and in all three territories. (In Quebec, English sector schools meet the needs of minority Anglophone children.) FFL schools not only teach all subjects (except English) in French, but also allow students to study within their own linguistic and cultural milieu. All activities are conducted in French: administration, announcements and assemblies, clubs and sports, report cards and parent/teacher conferences, school councils and so on. They become a focus of the Francophone community and family life. Programs, activities, communications and displays are designed to help foster a sense of identity and belonging to the French cultural and linguistic communities.

Allophone students

While most French immersion students are from English-speaking homes, a growing number come from homes where neither English nor French is the primary language. These students are successfully learning English and French as their second and third, or even fourth and fifth languages. See Opening the doors to official language learning for allophones.

Gifted students

Gifted students can thrive in an immersion program **if they also receive the benefit of special programming for their particular needs**.

A made-in-Canada solution!

Students with diverse learning needs

Researchers have found that, with very few exceptions, immersion students with diverse learning needs—from learning disabilities to low intelligence to behavioural problems—will do as well academically as they could be expected to do in an English program, **provided they receive the same assistance as they would if enrolled in the English stream**. Studies also indicate that immersion is not likely to be the cause of learning difficulties; the same challenges would arise in any educational setting. Any student who can learn to communicate in his or her first language can acquire a second language through the immersion process. For more information on this topic, see Inclusion of Students with Diverse Needs in French Immersion.

Parents

Researchers and educators also recognize parental support and commitment to the program as important factors in the success of any immersion student. A parent who is uncertain about the program, or has unrealistic expectations can undermine a child's motivation to learn. On the other hand, parents who are confident and well informed are also likely to be able to work with educators to solve any challenges their children might encounter.

Early immersion: "The gentle approach"

Early immersion has been called a "gentle" introduction to another language because:

- the teacher addresses the class in French, but understands and responds to English;
- five- and six-year-olds love to learn by repetition, mimicking and so on;
- young children's communication needs are not as complex as those of adults;
- young children are more tolerant of ambiguity than adults and don't feel as socially awkward as adults do when something is not understood;
- a young child's vocal structures are more flexible than an adult's, making it easier to develop an authentic accent;
- young children have not yet developed psychological and attitudinal barriers against the acquisition of a second language;
- the children feel they are "in the same boat"—and often help each other.

"The gentle approach"

In a typical French immersion kindergarten classroom, the teacher uses French all of the time, speaking in English only if a student's health or safety is at risk. Gestures, mime, pictures and objects are used to help children understand. Songs, poems, storytelling and choral speaking as well as routines or sequences of activities (such as beginning every day with a "bonjour" ritual and then calendar and weather routines) are also used to help familiarize students with words and ideas and to encourage their

earliest attempts to speak the language. Through watching and listening, students begin to recognize words and phrases, responding appropriately. Soon, they are singing along, joining in during the choral speaking and peppering their sentences with French words.

For the first couple of years, students are not expected to speak French at all times—there's absolutely no prohibition against students speaking in English. Rather, they're given positive encouragement to try out the new language. When they make mistakes, the teacher doesn't say they're wrong, but instead uses repetition and role modelling just as you did as your child was learning his or her first language.

Immersion students learn to be good listeners. They must attend not just to words but also to gestures, body movements, intonation and expression. In addition to these clues, they pick up on the similarities between certain English and French words (e.g., "banane" and "banana"). Students are also sensitive to the teacher's responses to what they do and say.

The teacher also listens and observes carefully to verify what information students possess and understand. On this basis, he or she consciously adapts speech and classroom activities to assist children.

Reporting on a study comparing the reactions of children beginning immersion and children in English kindergartens, researchers Sandra Weber and Claudette Tardif explained:

> Even in their first language, young children are accustomed to not understanding everything adults say. In addition, they do not feel as socially awkward about not understanding as adults might in a similar situation, nor are they as reluctant to ask for help. Not knowing everything, relying on adults and asking lots of questions are part of the socially accepted role of being a child. … At the beginning of the year, the immersion Kindergarten children often told us that they didn't understand French, but they were adamant in asserting that they did understand the teacher, who spoke almost exclusively in French. … For most of the immersion students, the second-language feature quickly became a natural, normal aspect of classroom life, something they just took for granted.[6]

In all other aspects, an immersion kindergarten is the same as an English kindergarten. The same kinds of themes and concepts are introduced and the same activities are carried out. The only exception is the inclusion of some aspects of French-Canadian culture.

At home you might hear your child using some French sounds and words as he or she plays. They might sing some of the French songs learned at school. However, don't be discouraged if they don't utter a single French sound at this stage: French is the normal language of communication at school, but can seem unnatural at home.

Why "total" immersion?

Since 1965, early French immersion has evolved from what was often a "bilingual" program (partial immersion), in which half of the time was spent in English and half in French, to "total immersion." This occurred because research done throughout the country consistently indicated that no matter when English language arts was introduced in the early years, immersion students were on a par with their English-program peers in all skill areas within a couple of years. However, teachers and parents were not satisfied with students' achievement in French. Developing a high level of competence in French required more classroom time than the bilingual program had initially targeted.

Immersion works so well because students are not just studying the language—they are using it in meaningful ways. The time spent in mathematics, social studies, music and other classes is also time spent learning French. But in order to use a skill for real purposes, you must first develop a certain level of competence. This is one of the reasons for the initial intense exposure to French in immersion programs: to bring students up to speed in the language so that their academic progress in the other subject areas will not be delayed.

Early immersion: The upward spiral of learning

French immersion is an upward spiral: the more children hear, read and use the language, in all subject areas, the better they will understand it; the better they understand it, the more successful they will be in all subject areas.

Further development of their French

As a general rule of thumb, children who participate in an immersion kindergarten (half days) will gradually switch from English sentences with French words and phrases thrown in to French sentences interspersed with some English by Christmas of Grade 1.

As students progress and their knowledge expands, the teacher introduces new vocabulary and language structures. At first this is done incidentally while talking about plants, animals, the seasons, families and so on. Later it's done methodically as more complex subject matter is introduced. The teacher is constantly on the alert for occasions where language development can occur effectively.

Teachers use various techniques to help students develop accuracy and express their thoughts clearly. Spend time in a French immersion classroom and you'll often hear the teacher repeating what a student has said, making corrections to a word or pronunciation, or even offering another way to say the same thing. The teacher will also frequently ask questions to encourage a student to expand a statement or express an idea in more detail. This is, of course, in addition to the specific teaching of vocabulary, grammar and syntax.

Various strategies are also used to encourage students to speak in French instead of English. For example, there might be an "English chair" in the room. When a child doesn't know a word, it's permissible to use English but only if sitting on that chair. The other students or the teacher then help the child out. Tokens

or points are also sometimes used. Whenever a student hears another student use English (except, of course, when sitting on the special chair), he can give that student a token. At the end of each month, those with no tokens receive a small prize or a special privilege.

Throughout an immersion program, teachers take advantage of occasions when language development can occur effectively and naturally. School or community activities such as field trips, performances, workshops, public speaking events and exchanges are frequently used to enrich language learning. These occasions also introduce students to the history and culture of French-speaking people, helping to give meaning and a "real-life" importance to the language.

You can only learn a language by using it! An immersion classroom is often noisy, with lots of talking, music, films, visitors and interaction.

What about the other subjects?

By the time reading skills are first introduced in the immersion classroom, children have a good beginning knowledge of the French language. The teacher builds on this knowledge using a variety of pre-reading and pre-writing activities to familiarize the students with any new vocabulary and structures they might encounter. Literacy is taught in all content areas (math, science, social studies...) and vocabulary development is encouraged as concepts are introduced.

The first math and science concepts are introduced in early immersion just as they are in the English program. The ideas presented at the primary level are very concrete and developed through the use of visual aids and hands-on activities. Teaching techniques and materials which encourage peer interaction and activity-oriented learning continue to be used throughout all immersion grade levels to allow for daily use of the language by all students. By the time they are exposed to more theoretical concepts, students have developed a good understanding of French and a functional use of the language.

A later start to immersion

Beginning early immersion after Kindergarten

A few school boards do not begin their early French immersion programs until Grade 1. In that case, the principles outlined in "The gentle approach" and Early Immersion: The upward spiral of learning still apply.

It's not unusual for children to join the program in Grade 1, often because their family has recently moved or just learned about French immersion. Some school boards may offer extra support to assist new students with their language development. Teachers may also encourage the other children to help their new classmates.

On the other hand, it is rare for a child to enter an early French immersion program after Grade 1. Factors which may need to be considered include the child's academic ability, motivation and work habits as well as the motivation and commitment of the parents, the size of the class and the experience, ability and willingness of the teacher.

A made-in-Canada solution!

Late immersion

Late immersion was first introduced by the Peel County Board of Education in Brampton, Ontario in 1971.[7] The program is now offered in at least one centre in every province.

Generally, parents make the choice of early immersion for their children, but the decision to enter late immersion is the students', along with their parents' support. Often they have been recommended for the program by their teachers. Some districts have established entrance criteria, but most rely on the parents' judgement and the students' self-selection.

Some key attributes such as tolerance of ambiguity and change, a willingness to take chances, a taste for challenges and the ability to laugh at oneself are very helpful for novice late immersion students. Good homework habits and study skills are also important assets.

The communication needs of young teenagers are more complex than those of five-year-olds, and the academic demands of school are greater in Grade 6 or 7 than in Kindergarten. For this reason, late immersion begins with an initial period dedicated to language development, the length of which will depend on the students' prior study in core French and the intensity of the immersion program. To get meaning across, teachers depend a great deal on gestures, props and visual aids, and students are encouraged to help each other.

Calgary student Michael Bradford explains:

> No matter how many times they [the teachers] explained something, and no matter how many times we still didn't understand a certain concept, they rarely seemed to mind, and they never made us feel humiliated. … [The students] soon became fast friends and were often able to help one another.[8]

Unlike early immersion, late immersion involves the use of written French from the beginning to speed language acquisition. As well, the late immersion students have more highly-developed first language skills that can be transferred to the second language situation.

The process has been called "successive approximation". "In other words, they will make mistakes, but 'the more they try, the better they get'."[9] The focus quickly broadens from survival knowledge ("Est-ce que je peux aller aux toilettes?") to the vocabulary and grammar needed to begin to tackle the various school subjects. From then on, students' competence in French develops not only during the French language arts period but also whenever they use the language in meaningful ways to study math, social studies, science, etc.

As in early immersion, the receptive skills (listening and reading) will develop first, the productive skills (speaking and writing), more slowly. However, these students have a lot of prior knowledge about how language works and about how to learn, so the acquisition of French proceeds quickly in late immersion.

While late immersion students are expected to cover the same content as regular English program students, in the first year or two of the program, some of the more complex concepts in certain subject areas may be simplified. These are revisited in later months and years when the students' language skills have increased.

A made-in-Canada solution!

A new school, new classmates, new routines, the need to be closely attentive every minute, the constant groping for words, extra homework—all of this can make the first few weeks and even months of late immersion tiring and a bit stressful. A student needs to expect this and know that it is normal.

Acknowledge your child's feelings and frustrations and try to understand his or her anxieties.

Michael Bradford offers this advice for students beginning late immersion:

> Don't be afraid to ask questions. If you don't understand, pester your teachers until you do. They should be glad to help you.
>
> Have no fear of making an error. Everyone's bound to make mistakes, so learn from them—that way you'll never have to worry about the ones you've already made.
>
> Try and apply your new language in conversation and writing. By seeing how and where everything fits together, your comprehension will improve.
>
> Don't be concerned about your English suffering because of your French. I found that my understanding of the parts of speech actually improved when they were pointed out to us in French.
>
> Most importantly, have fun with your French! It's easier to cope with if you enjoy using it.[10]

How good is their French?

> Second-language experts agree that four interrelated variables affect eventual attainment in a second language in school settings: age of entry into the program, the degree of intensity of language instruction in the program, the total cumulative time spent in the target language over the course of the program, and the pedagogical approach to language teaching of the program.[11]

Other factors affect the achievement of individual students, including attitude and motivation, parental involvement and encouragement, and the use of French outside of school in a variety of situations.

Early immersion

Early total immersion students soon understand what they hear and read. By Grade 5 or 6, when tested on topics to which they have been exposed either in or out of school, their listening comprehension is similar to that of their Francophone counterparts. The development of reading comprehension does not lag far behind. In other words, they will not be familiar with as wide a range of topics as native French-speakers will, but if they are acquainted with the specific vocabulary associated with a subject, they understand almost as well as Francophone students of the same age.

By junior high, their spoken and written French is quite functional. They are well able to communicate factual information, thoughts and ideas but they do make some mistakes with grammar and syntax.

A made-in-Canada solution!

Students do not reach native-like proficiency by the end of Grade 12 but they do achieve a high level of functional fluency. For example, they should be able to score in the highest or second-highest levels on federal government public service exams.[12] Immersion students have rated themselves as less confident in writing than in listening, speaking and reading.[13] See The secondary years and beyond.

Middle and late immersion

As in the case of early immersion, delayed-entry immersion programs vary in different parts of the country. The starting grade, the intensity of instruction in the first few years, and the number of subjects offered in French at the secondary level should all be considered.

Research shows that the earlier immersion starts, the higher the level of oral competency and spontaneous language use by the end of high school. On the other hand, middle and late immersion students tend to do as well as their early immersion counterparts in reading and writing.[14]

Early immersion graduate Erin Gibson illustrates the difference this way:

> When all the high school immersion students went to a French play, everyone understood the story and could do the follow-up assignment, but the early immersion students enjoyed more of the jokes!

Research has not yet clarified the implications of combining early and late immersion students for the last few secondary years.

What about their English?

Putting the program into perspective, early total French immersion students receive, on average, fewer than 8,000 hours of instruction in French from Kindergarten through Grade 12, compared to more than 63,000 waking hours surrounded by English in and outside of school. Late immersion involves just 2,500 to 3,900 hours of instruction.

> The loss of instructional time in English in favour of the second language has never been shown to have negative effects on the achievement of the first language. … One can confidently assume that cognitive abilities acquired in the learning of one language can be put to use in the acquisition and proficiency of the other language. In many studies first language skills were shown to be enhanced, even if instruction time in [the students' first language] was reduced in favour of [second language] instruction.[15]

The results of 45 years of studies undertaken across Canada are clear and consistent: early total immersion students tend to lag behind English-program students in the more technical aspects of the language (e.g., capitalization and spelling) only until they have had a year or two of English language arts. By Grade 5 or 6 (even if this subject has not been introduced until Grade 3 or 4), they perform as well as their English-program peers.

Further, many studies have found that from late elementary on, early total immersion students often outperform their English-program counterparts in some English skill areas. It's speculated that enhanced abilities in a student's first language may be the result of a greater awareness of language in general and the ability to compare and contrast the two language systems. Also, immersion students receive a "double dose" of language arts (see Learning to read and Learning to write).

Research has not revealed any negative impacts on the English language skills of middle or late immersion students.

One study explored the longer-term effects of immersion programs on what was termed "high level psycholinguistic functioning" in English (that is, language ability that is unlikely to surface in standardized achievement tests administered in school). Results showed the equal proficiency of English-speaking university students who had completed an early immersion program and those who had attended a regular English program, except in the area of the figurative and metaphoric use of language. In this area, the immersion group showed a dramatically higher understanding and use of figurative (poetic) language than did the non-immersion group. Researcher Gerald Neufeld suggests that, "While much work remains in this area, the idea that the acquisition of a new language can promote poetic use of one's own mother tongue is provocative and certainly worth further scrutiny."[16]

What else does research tell us?

> No educational program has been so intensively researched and evaluated in Canada as has French immersion. The effects of the program on the acquisition of French-language as well as English-language skills and the academic achievement of French immersion students have been well documented, and research shows that the program works.[17]

Other school subjects

From the beginning, research into the impact of immersion on learning in all subject areas has been uniformly reassuring.

> Research into immersion students' content learning suggests that students who are taught subject material in French generally perform as well as or better than their peers in regular English programs on English-language mathematics, science, and history tests.[18]

Several provinces now require students to write annual achievement tests. For many years, grades 3, 6, and 9 students in Alberta have written such exams in mathematics. As well, grades 6 and 9 have written science and social studies exams. In all three subject areas, French immersion students regularly show levels of achievement that are higher than the provincial levels for tests written in English. While it is important to understand that this is not a comparison of equivalent groups,[19] these results and similar ones from other provinces do serve to reassure us that immersion students are, on the whole, very successful learners.

A made-in-Canada solution!

Social and psychological effects

Studies have found no evidence of emotional or social difficulties linked to a child's immersion experience. The gentle introduction to French in the early immersion program helps to build students' confidence and ability to understand what is going on. Stresses experienced by children are often found to be related to factors other than immersion. In their study of kindergarten students, Weber and Tardif reported:

> We were very surprised at just how easily children adapted to the situation. … If anything, it was the school-specific rather than the language-specific aspects of the classroom experience that seemed to pose a challenge to some of the children: separating from parents, getting used to the concept of recess (not going home), learning the classroom rules about how to behave, adjusting to the demands of an unfamiliar schedule and way of doing things—these seemed to be the real challenges in both the regular and immersion classrooms.[20]

Immersion and second-language study seem, in fact, to enhance some aspects of students' social, psychological and intellectual development. Thinking and problem-solving skills, for example, may actually be strengthened by intensive exposure to a second language. This could be the result of an increased understanding of how language works, a greater sensitivity to linguistic meaning and/or greater cooperation between the hemispheres of the brain.

Cultural identity

Students do not lose their cultural identity in an immersion program, but rather seem to maintain a strong sense of their own identity while developing a sensitivity towards other peoples and cultures. In particular, studies have shown that French immersion students develop a greater affinity for Francophones and recognize more readily both the fundamental similarities and the significant differences between Canada's two official language groups than do regular program students.

For more information

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Notes

[1] Zwarun, Suzanne. "Language Rights." *Chatelaine*, January 1989, pp. 52 and 55.

[2] The earliest public immersion program on record was begun in 1958 in the English-language West Island School Commission in Quebec, with a class of 18 students. The private Toronto French School began its immersion program in 1962.

[3] Enrolment data is gathered annually by Canadian Parents for French from the provincial and territorial education departments.

[4] Moving families can obtain information from a searchable database of French immersion programs throughout the country on the Canadian Parents for French website. A directory of programs in the United States is maintained by the Center for Applied Linguistics.

[5] Lorenz, Ellen B. and Myriam Met. *Foreign Language Immersion: An Introduction*. Division of Academic Skills, Montgomery County Public Schools, Rockville, Maryland, 1990, pp. 30–34.

[6] Weber, Sandra and Claudette Tardif. "The Young Child's View of Starting French Immersion." *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!*, Canadian Parents for French, 1990, p. 56.

[7] Reid, Cliff. "The Concept of Late Immersion." *Rendezvous*, French Second Language Council, New Brunswick Teachers' Association, XII(2) November 1981, p. 4.

[8] Bradford, Michael. "The Opportunity of a Lifetime." *CPF Alberta News*, spring 1991, p. 2.

[9] Stolen, Dennis and Craig Dunbar. *So … You Decided to Take Late French Immersion: A Parent Guide*. Ministry of Education, Province of British Columbia, 1988, p. 7.

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[11] Dicks, Joseph and Kirstmanson, Paula Lee. "French Immersion: When and Why?" *The State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada 2008*, Canadian Parents for French, p. 1. Retrieved on August 17, 2011 from www.cpf.ca/eng/pdf/resources/reports/fsl/2008/03_FI_When_and_Why_E.pdf.

[12] Evaluation Plus. "Alberta's French as a Second Language Assessment Project with the Public Service Commission of Canada." Edmonton Public Schools, 2005.

[13] See for example "University Students and French Immersion Programs: A Student Survey." Canadian Parents for French, 2005. Retrieved on August 17, 2011 from www.cpf.ca/eng/pdf/resources/reports/fsl/2005/Student_Survey_Long.pdf.

[14] Dicks, Joseph and Kirstmanson, Paula Lee. "French Immersion: When and Why?" *The State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada 2008*, Canadian Parents for French, p. 2. Retrieved on August 17, 2011 from www.cpf.ca/eng/pdf/resources/reports/fsl/2008/03_FI_When_and_Why_E.pdf.

[15] Bournot-Trites, Monique and Ulrike Tellowitz. "Report of Current Research on the Effects of Second Language Learning on First Language Literacy Skills." Atlantic Provinces Educational Foundation, January 2002, p. 3. Retrieved on August 17, 2011 from www.edina.k12.mn.us/normandale/media/weblinks/teachers/pdfs/report1.pdf.

[16] Neufeld, Gerald. "Early French Immersion and Proficiency in English: Some Long-range Effects." *Language and Society*, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 43, summer 1993, p. 10.

[17] "Information Note." Canadian Education Association, August 1992.

[18] Lazaruk, Wally. "Linguistic, Academic, and Cognitive Benefits of French Immersion." *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63, 5, August 2007, p. 615.

[19] Because participation in the French immersion program is voluntary, there are no controls to ensure that the group of students writing the French version of an achievement test and the group writing the English version are equivalent—that is, to ensure that the only difference between them is the language of instruction.

[20] Weber, Sandra and Claudette Tardif. "The Young Child's View of Starting French Immersion." *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!*, Canadian Parents for French, 1990, p. 55. See also Janette Pelletier. "A Comparison of Children's Understanding of School in Regular English Language and French Immersion Kindergartens." *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 55, 2, December 1998, pp. 239–259.

How do I prepare my child for early immersion?

The best advice we can offer you when you are enrolling your child in an early French immersion program is to prepare him or her for school just as you would if they were entering the English stream, from ensuring that they can manage their own jacket and shoes to making them comfortable spending time away from you.

Anything you can do to familiarize them with the school, the playground, the teacher (if possible during the spring), future classmates (if you don't know any of the other parents, you may meet them at a spring information/orientation meeting), the route to and from school, and the routine they'll follow will make the transition that much smoother.

Most, if not all, of the children in their class will have no prior knowledge of French, so don't feel it's necessary to put them in a French preschool or daycare. On the other hand, it's a good idea to expose them to a little French beforehand so that they can enjoy some familiarity with the sound of the language: a French cartoon, French music on a children's CD, a vocabulary-building computer game.

Finally, do keep in mind that chronological age and developmental age are not the same. Children don't all reach the level of maturity necessary to handle the demands of school in September of the year in which they turn five. A child who's not yet ready for school will do no better in French immersion than he or she would in an English kindergarten. If you're in doubt, consult with an experienced kindergarten teacher and consider waiting. One teacher says, "I always recommend that children be put into Grade 1 at the latest possible date. It's always easier to be the oldest and most mature than the youngest and least developed. Even a very bright child can be kept interested and busy with enough effort, and without an early entry into school."[1]

How can I provide a foundation for learning?

Success in school is strongly influenced by activities and experiences in the home and community which stimulate a child's imagination and intellect, enhance self-esteem, teach good work habits, and provide motivation to learn as well as a good foundation for academic learning.

Everyday learning

Often, the things you do with your child every day, just as a matter of family routine, are the most important! For example:

- having a young child help you load the dishwasher or set the table can be a lesson in organization and spacial relationships; counting the forks could help with math;
- cooking or gardening together can spark curiosity about scientific principles (why the yeast makes the bread rise or how a plant grows from a seed);

- encouraging creativity can be as simple as keeping a supply of paints, paper, glue and fabric scraps within easy reach, or keeping the cardboard box from the new fridge for a budding architect or carpenter to turn into a house, garage or puppet theatre;
- watching a television program together and then discussing it can help to develop analytical and debating skills;
- playing games of all kinds, at all ages (e.g. cards, dominoes, board games) can develop observation and reasoning skills, memory, vocabulary, spelling and math skills;
- discovering or problem-solving during a shopping trip (Where do oranges grow? If 100 g costs 20¢, how much would 200 g cost? Why must the meat be kept chilled?);
- belonging to a sports team or a club can develop cooperation and leadership skills;
- a summer vacation is a chance to learn about geography, history, and how to use a map;
- doing chores teaches responsibility and self-discipline.

First-language development

A language-rich home prepares a child for, and supports, ongoing literacy development—in any language. Just a few suggestions:

- talk about words: words that sound funny, have more than one meaning, mean the same or are opposites, etc.;
- have fun with story-telling and make-believe play;
- use a lot of adjectives and adverbs, and encourage your child to use descriptors;
- ask open-ended questions (What's next? What if? What's happening? etc.);
- use starters that encourage conversation (I wonder …, Tell me about ...);
- "think out loud" as you go about routine tasks;
- plan together, and then, after the activity or event, talk about what you've done;
- talk about feelings, and give your child words to help her describe how he or she feels.

What about homework?

Homework—whether in the English stream or a French immersion program—has three main purposes:

- to finish work not completed in school;
- to provide extra practice;

- to help students develop independent work and study skills.

Homework is based on what has already been covered in school. If your child doesn't understand what's expected, try having him or her think back to what the teacher said and what they did that day. If this is a frequent occurrence, you should consult with the teacher.

Even when the homework is in French, you can help your child by coaching him or her in:

- using a dictionary and a book of synonyms and antonyms;
- making sense of problems and using different strategies for solving them;
- taking notes;
- knowing how and where to do research;
- knowing how to brainstorm and use mind maps;
- learning the process of making an outline, writing a draft, then editing for correctness;
- using mnemonics to remember terms, authors, titles, formulas, etc.;
- making connections to real-life examples and to prior learning and experiences.

For more see What have other immersion parents learned?

How much homework to expect

An elementary immersion student is not expected to have significantly more homework than other students at the same grade level. A secondary immersion student should compare his or her homework load to that of others taking similar courses.

Early in the school year, you should learn from your child's teacher approximately how much homework to expect. Of course, there will be variations from night to night, but if your child is consistently spending far more or far less time than expected, you should discuss this with the teacher. Your child might not be understanding the work or managing his or her time effectively. Or they might be putting far more into the assignments than required.

How can I encourage good study habits?

Regardless of the language in which your child is learning, you can help him or her develop study and organizational skills that will be vital to success throughout their life. The following tips will help get you started. Remember that it takes time and patience to develop good habits, but they are easier to establish when a child is young.

I want to help, but it's in French!

A place to study

Decide together on a place to study. A desk and chair in a quiet corner of your home might seem like an ideal setting to you, but your child might prefer to work at the kitchen table. Some children like the independence of their own rooms; others work best near their parents and family activity. Take into consideration his or her needs with regard to light, heat, background noise and posture. It's a good idea to have one place in the house where they regularly do their schoolwork.

A time for study

Ensure that your child has sufficient time for study. It doesn't have to be the same time each day if you have to work around piano lessons and soccer practice, but it's best to plan the time in advance. Some children work best right after school; others need a break and prefer to wait until after supper. If your child is in an after-school care program, you may want to suggest that he or she do at least some work there, if the atmosphere is conducive, so that evenings are less hectic.

Help your child learn how to plan his or her time. Draw a grid with the days of the week across the top and the times, from the time they get up until they go to bed, down the left side in half-hour blocks. Fill in the squares together: they'll get a picture of daily life which makes it much easier to understand why certain things need to be done at specific times. Mark in school hours, sports, clubs, lessons, family activities, favourite TV shows. Then post the schedule in a prominent spot in his room or on the fridge. As they get older, they can take more and more responsibility for preparing and following their personal schedule.

During homework time, allow stretch breaks and treat breaks (the younger they are, the more frequent the breaks should be). Help them understand how to use these breaks as rewards for completing a certain portion of homework.

Keeping track of assignments

Most schools now provide a yearly agenda: a booklet including a calendar of school events for the year, pages for keeping track of assignments and marks, etc. Showing your child how to keep track of assignments (and other activities) early in his or her school career will stand them in good stead when homework increases and their social schedule gets busier.

Show them how to keep track of the homework the teacher assigns and the date it's due. When they come home, take an interest in their agenda, talk over their assignments and due dates, help them plan a schedule for getting things done, and discuss what other activities should be noted (club meetings, sports schedules, birthdays, and so on).

As your child receives larger assignments or has to study for major exams, teach him or her how to break the work down into sections to be dealt with a bit at a time, so that the tasks don't seem so overwhelming.

Supplies

A hunt for a sharp pencil can take up a lot of homework time! Be sure your child has the tools to do the job: computer, tablet, pens, pencils, erasers, pencil sharpener, scissors, tape, paper clips, stapler, a ruler,

highlighter pens, paper and so on. Keep materials all together in a desk drawer or in a basket or box where they will be easily accessible during study time.

If he or she needs help understanding the passage of time, put a clock or kitchen timer on the desk.

Don't forget!

Have a consistent place for your child to put his or her completed homework, agenda, permission slips, school library books, etc. Getting ready to leave for school the next morning will be less hectic if your child is prepared and organized.

What have other immersion parents learned?

Unlike the parents of the first French immersion students, you have the advantage of decades of research and experience. Not only have educators made tremendous strides in understanding how to teach second languages, but parents have learned how to cope when their children are being instructed in a language that they (the parents) may not completely understand.

Be happy about your child's progress!

You may, as a parent of a French immersion student, find that your child's French language skills will exceed your own skills. Even if you studied French for several years in school, you may soon find him or her correcting your accent, and within a few months or years their fluency will exceed yours.

Learning styles

Today educators recognize that there are different learning styles and different "types of smart"—for example there is much information available on auditory, visual, and tactile/kinesthetic learners and also on multiple intelligences. Teachers now use a variety of techniques to build on the strengths of all of their students.

Differences between the ways you and your child learn—rather than the French—can cause frustration when you try to help with schoolwork. Understanding your child's unique learning style will give you valuable insights into the best ways to help them. You will find a great deal of information on these concepts at your library and on the Internet, or encourage your school to offer information sessions on learning styles and multiple intelligences.

Ask the right questions

You may become concerned if your child is unable to answer a question like: "What's your book/TV program about?" or "What is he saying?" Young children often think they're being asked for a word-by-word translation or a very detailed description. Ask something more specific based on the pictures or context: "Is it mainly about a boy or a girl?" or "What's that boy's name? Is he the main person in the story?"

Ask questions that will help them develop the ability to analyze and summarize. Remember those book reports you did in high school: plot, main characters, setting, conflict, resolution and so on? You can elicit the same information with simple, concrete questions. Then, as your child gradually comes to understand these concepts, make your questions more general.

La dictée

There is one time when a lack of French will be a definite disadvantage: when your child must practice "la dictée" (dictation used as a spelling exercise). Unless your accent is good, he or she will find it difficult to have you read out the words or sentences for them. Parents have found creative solutions, like having their child record the weekly exercise and then play it back to herself each night, or having two students take turns dictating to each other over the phone.

While it's difficult to write a whole sentence from memory, there are other ways to practice those words which cause the most difficulty. For instance, fold a piece of paper into an accordion, with the folds running horizontally across the page. Write the word or phrase on the top section. Your child can look at it, then fold the word under and try to write it on the second section of paper, check it, try it again if incorrect, etc.

In either language, try posting problem words in big letters in a place where your child will see them frequently.

Mathematics

Just like in English, math vocabulary development is necessary. Help your child review terms in context. Children need concrete examples and experiences in order to learn about numbers, sorting, classifying, sequencing, time, sizes (length, weight, volume) and so on. For example, it's much easier to understand the concepts of adding, subtracting or multiplying by using toothpicks or beans than by just manipulating symbols on a page—and you can do that in English. Immersion students quickly acquire the vocabulary to deal with this subject in both languages (minus is "moins," plus is "plus," equals is "égale" or "font"). Consider asking your child's Grade 1 teacher to give the parents a workshop on teaching mathematics, or suggest it as a topic for a school parents' council meeting.

Story problems ("If Johnny has three apples and Janey has two, then ...") challenge many students, and can be even more problematic when written in their second language. Help your child learn to focus on the exact meaning of each word in the sentence. Teach them how to draw a picture or diagram illustrating the problem, or even to act it out. These are strategies they must acquire in order to deal with more complex problems, so developing them early will give them a head start.

For many more ideas, see Working Together in Mathematics Education, and to learn about the Alberta mathematics curriculum, see Fact Sheets & Useful Links.

A different routine

Because many French immersion students are bussed to school, some of your child's routines may be different from the ones you experienced during your schooling. Immersion schools often organize activities like clubs and intramural sports during the noon hours rather than before or after school. In

order for your child to socialize with classmates from other neighbourhoods, or work on joint homework assignment, you'll probably find yourself planning with other parents to have friends come home with them from time to time. Some schools facilitate this by circulating (with each family's permission) lists of names, addresses and phone numbers.

Don't forget your own culture

To become fluent in another language, one must learn about the people who speak it and their culture. This is why children in French immersion programs are exposed to many French cultural experiences. Meanwhile, it is important to continue sharing your childhood experiences, reading fairy tales, nursery rhymes, poems and stories, playing games and listening to music with your child. Expose him or her to your own traditions, folklore and stories, to develop in them a strong sense of identity with their own culture.

After a few years …

By the time your child reaches the middle elementary grades, he or she will be able to tell you what they're learning or receive explanations in English even when the subject matter is taught in French. Although immersion students can't do word-for-word translations (that's a five-year university course), your child will certainly be able to ask you for help with Archimedes' principle, the role of the federal government, or multiplying fractions and transfer the concept back into French. Students become quite skilled in transferring their thoughts or speech from one language to another.

French courses for parents

Some parents like to learn a little French along with their children, or to brush up on what they learned in school. If this interests you:

- most school-board, college and university continuing education departments offer French language courses at various levels, from beginner to advanced;
- some local Canadian Parents for French chapters offer "French for immersion parents" courses; if not, ask your provincial CPF branch about suitable programs in your area;
- the Alliance française offers French courses in major cities across Canada.

Will my child need French resources at home?

Once your child is settled in school, you'll need to consider some home reference material, as he or she will require resources in both French and English. The following are a few ideas to get you started with your French collection.

We suggest you also ask your child's teachers for advice on what will best support his or her learning needs at each grade level. They may have other suggestions or be able to recommend some titles. Help and advice might also be sought at a French bookstore, where the clerks may be used to assisting

immersion as well as Francophone parents. French educational software is also available. Canadian Parents for French newsletters and websites often carry the names and addresses of bookstores and publishing houses that accept mail orders.

Dictionaries

A picture/word dictionary is a great way for Kindergarten and Grade 1 students to develop vocabulary and word recognition.

A good beginner's French dictionary should be illustrated and have print that is easy for the young reader to use. Look for one that shows how the word is used in a sentence or phrase.

By the upper elementary grades, a good French dictionary is important for everyday use. Look for the same features that you want in an English dictionary: a phonetic guide to pronunciation, the identification of parts of speech and noun gender,[2] common expressions using the word, examples of how it is used in sentences, help with common usage problems, and so on.

You might also find an adult-level French/English dictionary very helpful.

Verbs, words, and grammar

Anyone who writes in French finds a verb reference book invaluable. These list all the regular and irregular verb conjugations for all the tenses.

A senior high student might also appreciate a book of synonyms and antonyms and a reference grammar.

Online resources

The Internet offers a growing source of French resources. For example:

- At LearnAlberta.ca you can access a wide array of online multi-media learning resources that are directly tied to what students are learning in Alberta classrooms.
- The resources at www.2learn.ca are also linked directly to the Alberta curriculum. For resources in French, go to www.pourapprendre.ca.
- Find links to a multitude of online resources in the "Parents & Students" section of the Canadian Parents for French national website. See also the "For students" section of the CPF Alberta website.

How can I keep in touch with the school?

In French immersion schools, the language of communication with the home—in meeting notices, newsletters, report cards, etc.—is English.

Good communication is important if parents and teachers are to form an effective team. There are a number of ways to make this happen and we present some here in alphabetical order.

I want to help, but it's in French!

But first, a general comment:

Help the teacher understand your needs. A bilingual French immersion teacher can't always be "in tune" with a unilingual parent's perceptions of the program. You can assist the teacher and the other parents by helping him or her to understand any concerns that you may have.

Class meetings

A teacher, especially at the Kindergarten or Grade 1 level, might invite parents to a special class meeting early in the school year to introduce them to plans and teaching methods and to request some volunteer assistance. Because the concept of immersion is new to them, parents appreciate this kind of session to find out more about the program and how they can offer their child support.

Class newsletter

Many teachers keep parents apprised of classroom activities and learning goals. On a weekly, biweekly or monthly basis, their newsletter includes information on topics such as learning goals, upcoming themes (the weather, my family, etc.), the major activities the children will be doing, word lists or mathematical concepts to be covered, and requests for assistance (e.g., materials needed from home for craft projects).

Home/school notebook

When there is a need for daily ongoing home/school communication, a notebook or student agenda can be of real benefit. Each day the teacher jots down his or her notes to you: homework assignments to be done, observations of your child's work and/or behaviour and so on. That evening, you review these notes, adding your own messages and comments for the teacher to read the next morning.

Internet sites

Many schools use their Internet sites (with passwords) to post homework assignments and grades, so that parents can access that information in a timely fashion.

Meet-the-teacher night

Many schools hold such a session early in the school year. It's often a chance for your child to introduce you to his or her teacher, classroom, desk and samples of their work. Sometimes parents receive a brief overview of the year's learning goals from the teacher, then go on to the gym or theatre to hear from the principal. At the secondary level, you might follow your child's normal daily schedule, moving from room to room for brief "classes." Whatever the format, it's an excellent opportunity to begin your acquaintance with the school, staff and even some other parents. You'll also pick up key pieces of information, like how much homework to expect, school and class rules, and so on.

I want to help, but it's in French!

School newsletters

Paying attention to school newsletters is a good way to keep informed. Increasingly, schools are circulating their parent newsletters via the Internet rather than in print, so you will need to check the school website regularly and mark important dates on your calendar right away.

Open house

These events may be held during Education Week, in the spring during registration, or to cap off a school-wide project. Children can show their accomplishments not only to parents but also to siblings and grandparents.

Parent questionnaires

In any given year, your school might ask you to complete a questionnaire designed to give the teacher some background information on your child: family make-up, any health or emotional issues, his or her interests, sports, and hobbies, special likes and dislikes, and so on. This isn't designed to pry or interfere, but to help the teacher see your child as a whole person, build on strengths, and be aware of any areas of concern.

School councils

Public schools in Alberta are required to establish school councils. These bodies provide parents with the opportunity to advise the principal and the school board respecting any matter relating to the school. A school council might also host information meetings or workshops for its member parents, with guest speakers on a variety of relevant topics.

School handbook

This is a booklet or section of the school website containing information on your school's policies, procedures and objectives. It might also include an introduction to different programs within the school, counselling services, noon-hour and after-school activities.

Telephone

Ensure that the school office always has your current home, work and mobile phone numbers. Early in the year, send a note to the teacher giving the same information and best times to reach you. Teachers are difficult to reach during class hours, therefore you may be asked to leave a message stating the times when you can be reached.

Volunteering

Parents are encouraged to volunteer. There are many ways you can assist: by preparing materials, shelving books, making and collating copies, doing some phoning, providing transportation and extra supervision for field trips, collecting and counting hot dog day money, organizing a book fair or orienting families new to the school. As a volunteer, you'll learn more about the ways in which your child is being taught, gain insight into the school routine and get to know the teacher and other school staff better.

Those whose French is good enough are often invited to speak on their careers, hobbies or other areas of expertise, or just to listen to the children read.

If you can't get to the school during the day, let the teacher know that you're willing to do things at home (bake cookies, make posters, edit a newsletter, telephone other volunteers, make arrangements for a field trip). Your child will be proud of your contribution to his or her class and see that you think school is important.

Consider volunteering for your school council, either as an executive or committee member or to assist with a particular project. Remember that a bit of expertise can be just as valuable a contribution as a lot of time.

How can I get the most from parent-teacher conferences?

Most parents with children in school will tell you that the time set aside for each report card conference is very limited. It's important for both parents and teachers to prepare carefully in order to make these meetings effective.

Many schools now involve students in these meetings. In one example, small groups of students receive their parents in their classroom to show their work and discuss their progress. For a period of 30-60 minutes, the students and parents work through prepared activities while the teacher moves around the room, spending a few minutes with each family. This type of conferencing answers many needs. Students take ownership of their learning. They become aware of the importance of work goals and develop responsibility and leadership skills. Parents hear directly from their children about learning objectives and see samples of their work. However, don't hesitate to request a private meeting with the teacher if there is more you want to discuss.

Misunderstandings can occur between two people who speak the same language; careful listening is even more important when one or both of the participants are using another language. Check that you have understood by restating a comment in your own words. Ask for specific examples to help clarify a point, or give examples if you believe the teacher does not understand you completely.

Finally, remember that teachers are human too! Some get even more nervous about these meetings than certain parents. Remember that the objective of a conference is for you and the teacher to discuss and become partners in supporting your child's education.

> One teacher always tells parents in September, "I promise to believe only half of what the children tell me about their families if you'll promise to believe only half of what they say about me!"

To get the most out of meetings with the teacher:

- Read over the report card carefully and compare it to previous reports.
- Talk to your child. Let them know that the conference is an opportunity for you, them and the teacher to discuss how to work together to help them become an even more successful learner. Find out what

he or she likes or dislikes about school, what they believe are their successes and challenges, and how they feel about their learning.

- Think about what you want to learn from the meeting. Write down your questions and comments. Be prepared to give specific examples, especially if you wish to raise a particular concern.
- Time is precious: don't waste it on small talk.
- Share information and insights into other aspects of your child's life which can influence his learning.
- Ask for an explanation of any unknown term, and don't be intimidated by jargon.
- To get clarifications or examples, ask questions. For example, if told that your child is often last to finish a math assignment, you might find after further discussion that it's because he or she is daydreaming, or going to too much trouble to print the numbers very neatly.
- Discuss your child's learning style and specific learning needs. If told that your child is experiencing a problem, don't take it personally. Ask the teacher questions for more clarification to get to the possible cause. Compare the teacher's perceptions with your own or with those of your child's other teachers, exploring possible reasons for any differences. (For more information on this subject, see Diverse needs in French immersion.)
- Make another appointment with the teacher, if there's not enough time to address all your questions or concerns. So that you can both be prepared, take a minute to develop a list of the topics to be explored further.
- Go over your notes from the meeting, and if something still isn't clear, or you think of another question, follow up with a note or call to the teacher. Then file your notes for future reference.
- Have a follow-up conversation with your child about what was covered. Talk about both their strengths and areas in need of growth. If they need help, talk about what will be done to provide this assistance, or what you can do together.

For more information

Accent Alberta, an online directory of resources and activities in French for schools

Curriculum Handbooks for Parents, Alberta Education

How to be a Successful, Organized Student, Alberta Education

How to Study Effectively, Alberta Education

Time Management: How to stay organized and use your time wisely, Alberta Education

Tips for Parents, Alberta Education

Working Together in Mathematics Education, Alberta Education

Notes

[1] Cioni, Mary Jane. "So, Johnny's Report Wasn't Wonderful!" *CPF National Newsletter*, 30, June 1985, p. 4.

[2] In French, every noun is either masculine or feminine (see Similarities and differences).

The foundation for reading

The most important foundation for reading is established long before your child goes to school. Educators insist there is nothing more important that you can do for him or her than to establish a love and appreciation of the written word.

Make reading an important part of your lives

Read to your child often in your home language, and let them see you reading and using print and digital resources frequently.

Don't wait until your child is reading to take him or her to the library. A three-year-old can attend library programs and browse through books with you. Later, you can teach them where to find the books they want and how to sign them out.

Use books and other written materials together. Look up something of current interest in a reference book or the Internet (How do we care for our new puppy? What should we see on our holidays?) and let your child look at the pictures while you read the section or instructions out loud.

Don't stop reading to your child once he or she can read. Continue to read aloud as long as they'll let you. Take the opportunity to expose them to literature that's a bit beyond their own reading level. It's also an opportunity to share some time together, and to show that books can be as enjoyable as games and television.

Expose your child to a variety of written material:

- materials with repetitive words and phrases that he or she will begin to "read" along with you;
- stories and poems about everyday experiences which you can then discuss in relation to your child's own life;
- materials that help explain events in your child's life;
- materials that expand his or her knowledge;
- stories and poems that take them into another, interesting world;
- materials that give instructions or directions;
- material that's just plain fun, like riddles and silly rhymes;
- and especially important for early immersion students, materials that expose them to their own culture.

Prepare your child's ear and eye for reading

The ability to identify similarities and differences between sounds and the sequence of sounds within a word is fundamental to both reading and spelling. This ability is independent of the language used: it's not the name of a letter but the sound that's important. For example:

Learning to read

- Whether you call the second letter of the alphabet "bee" (English) or "bay" (French), your child needs to recognize the b sound wherever it occurs in a word (**b**ut, tu**b**, ru**bb**er); he or she must also be able to differentiate it from similar sounds (**b**ut/**p**utt, **b**oo/**d**o).

- There are many activities that you can do with your child during reading time at home, while riding in the car, and in various stolen moments (e. g., in waiting rooms and line-ups or while preparing supper) to develop such important pre-literacy skills. Games like "I Spy" (use the sound, not the name for the letter: ss rather than ess), thinking of rhyming words, and making up sentences with the same initial sound for every word can combine real fun with serious learning.

- Likewise, since reading depends on seeing differences between shapes (like b, d and p), any games or activities that provide practice recognizing small differences will help (e.g., the card game "Snap", or finding differences between two similar pictures).

Encourage your child to be an active and thoughtful listener:

- Ask for his or her opinion on something you've just read to them. Did they like it? Why or why not? Then talk about your own reactions.

- Talk about the pictures.

- Stop at some point in the story and ask them what they think might come next. When they're older, you might occasionally have fun together making up alternative endings.

- Talk about any words they don't understand.

- Ask them whether the item you read is fact or fiction, then have them explain their answer.

- Relate the story to personal experience, either theirs or your own.

- If they're interested, encourage them to tell you parts of familiar stories.

- Encourage them to retell stories to someone else in your house—or even to their stuffed toys.

When do children learn to read?

"Parents Ask about Language Learning" by Alberta Education and the University of Alberta explains:

- Sometime between the ages of five and seven, most children:
  - learn to recognize what many words say,
  - make useful connections between sounds and letters,
  - realize that words on the page fit together to make meaning,
  - begin to read stories and books.
- These are the traditional signs of 'starting to read'. Learning to become a more competent reader continues on through the elementary school years, and beyond.[1]

Learning to read

Some Grade 1 immersion teachers focus at the beginning of the year on developing students' French oral language competency while continuing with pre-reading activities. They proceed more slowly with reading instruction than their English-program counterparts. This is to ensure that students develop a good French language base in order to make sense of what they read. In the long run, this minor delay makes no difference to the students' achievement—indeed, the more ready a child is to learn, the more quickly he or she will progress.

Just as it's unfair to compare when two children first walked or talked, it's unfair to compare when they first read a word or a sentence. You should be watching for reasonable progress. If your child has a tendency to compare himself or herself with siblings or friends, help them instead to compare how they're doing today with how they did last week or last month.

But I wasn't taught to read that way!

If you were taught to read only by sounding out the letters (phonics), you may be confused by the way your child is taught to read. It's now recognized that people employ a variety of strategies to make sense of all those squiggles on the page, and that different people find different strategies work better for them. For this reason, children are taught several clues for identifying words, including:

- recognizing very common words by sight;
- using clues provided by such things as the length or shape of a word, the beginning letters, illustrations, or the meaning of a passage to predict what the word might be;
- looking for "root words" or familiar word parts (endings, rhyming parts, etc.) to assist in figuring out an unknown word;
- sometimes skipping over an unknown word, continuing on reading, and using the meaning from the rest of the sentence to help identify the unfamiliar word.[2]

This does not mean that phonics clues are ignored. Your child needs to learn how to use the sounds of the letters to figure out new words. It means that phonics is not the only word-recognition strategy taught. It also means that, from the beginning, emphasis is placed not just on sounding out words but also on understanding what is read.

As you watch your child read in French …

Here are some differences between French and English pronunciation that might be most obvious to you as you follow along with your child's reading:

- stress falls on the last syllable (ami sounds like am-**ee**);
- while there are significant differences between the sounds of the vowels in the two languages, the consonants are essentially the same;

- accents change the sounds of vowels: e sounds much like the short English e (heck) while é has the long a sound (hay);
- au has the long o sound (so);
- ch is pronounced like the English sh (chef);
- eau has the long o sound (so);
- er and ez at the end of a word have the long a sound (hay);
- h is always silent in French;
- i is pronounced like the long English e (bee);
- ou in French always sounds like group (not out);
- oi and oy sound like the wa in water;
- qu sounds like k (not like kw as in quick);
- s at the end of a word to indicate the plural is silent;
- th is pronounced t;
- when a word begins with a vowel (or a silent h), it is usually joined with the last consonant of the preceding word—which may make it sound as though your child is reading one word instead of two.

Should I teach my child to read in English?

It's not necessary to provide formal English reading lessons at home. Formal home lessons lengthen the school day, and change your role and relationship with your child from a parent's to a teacher's. Rather, continue to read with your child and talk about the stories you've read.

You should, however, encourage any attempts your child makes to read in English by answering his or her questions and praising their efforts. You can have some interesting discussions comparing and contrasting the two languages (or three, if another is spoken in your home). The incentive to read English is extremely strong, so your child will try to do it when he or she is ready.

The transition to reading in English

The motivation for children to read the language by which they are surrounded is very high. Many children in French immersion will, once they've developed some confidence with reading in French, attempt to decipher high-interest English words without any prompting from a teacher or parent. They may apply French sounds, but usually, because of the context and their familiarity with English, they're quickly able to determine the correct pronunciation.

Learning to read

Both French and English are read from left to right, use the same alphabet, and use groups of letters to form words. The sentence structures of the two languages are fairly similar. All of this makes it relatively easy for children to transfer the skill of reading from French to English.

When English language arts is introduced, the teacher helps the children to build on what they already know about reading and to gain confidence in their ability to read in English. He or she guides them through the process of sorting out the differences between the two languages that "interfere" with this transfer (see What your child must learn about English). Studies clearly and consistently show that within two years, French immersion students are working at the same level as their peers in the English program.

What can you do?

Appreciate their beginning attempts at reading in English and remark on their progress. Don't discourage them by being critical of mistakes, but rather make them comfortable with taking risks.

It's also very important to continue to read to your child each day, and to discuss and enjoy these stories together. Run your finger along the sentences as you read them, so that they can follow with their eyes and begin to recognize some words. As they begin to express an interest in tackling English, try reading aloud in unison. Sit side by side with a book of their choosing. Match your reading speed and the volume of your voice with theirs as you read along together (it'll take a little practice). Have a prearranged signal for them to let you know when they want to try a passage on their own, then have you join in with them again. As they develop confidence with simple books, use this technique with more challenging materials that are too difficult for them to read on their own.

If your child is encountering difficulties that continue to cause frustration, do speak with his or her teacher.

What your child must learn about English

Here are a few of the differences between the two languages that the "transition year" English language arts teacher will help your child sort out (see also As you watch your child read in French ...):

- there are several differences between the sounds of the vowels;
- in English the sound of an a is changed in combinations such as al and aw;
- because a silent e at the end of French words often does not affect the pronunciation of the word, the concept of an ending e changing a vowel from a short to a long sound must be explained (e.g., tap, tape);
- the sound of the letter h must be introduced, as it is not pronounced in French (don't be surprised if at first your child sounds hand as and);
- the sound of qu as in quick must be introduced;
- the use of the letter r after a vowel in French does not alter the sound significantly, so English words such as bird, for, and church will have to be emphasized;

- the sound of th must be introduced;
- because w and x are rarely used in French, their sounds must be introduced;
- additional sounds for the letter y must be introduced.

Encourage reading in French!

By Grade 4 or 5, you'll wonder why you ever worried about reading in English! By that time, immersion students are much more likely to do their leisure reading in English.[3] Because reading is so fundamental to the development of language skills (vocabulary, grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.), this is a worrying tendency. The less exposure to French, the more slowly their second-language proficiency will develop.

Teachers do what they can to promote independent reading in French by providing incentives, time to read in class, and access to appropriate and interesting books and other materials. Here are a few ways you can encourage reading in French:

- find materials on subjects that your child is especially interested in (don't forget non-fiction, such as materials on a hobby, sport or scientific topic);
- look for materials which allow him to get satisfaction from reading a small amount at a time: short stories, magazines, comic books, reference books, etc.;
- trade stories: he reads a story to you in French, you read one to him in English.

For more information

Helping your child to learn to read – A parent's guide, Ontario Ministry of Education

The "For parents" section of the Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch website

Many good French/English dictionaries include introductions to French grammar and pronunciation

Notes

[1] "Parents Ask about Language Learning." Alberta Education and the University of Alberta, 1991, p. 2.

[2] "Parents Ask about Language Learning." Alberta Education and the University of Alberta, 1991, p. 3.

[3] For example, in an article entitled "Reading for Pleasure in French: A Study of the Reading Habits and Interests of French Immersion Children", the authors report on the voluntary reading patterns of 127 Calgary students in Grade 5. Although they had not begun to study English language arts until Grade 3, 85% said that they found it easier to read in English than in French. The students spent an average of 33 minutes a day reading English books, comics, newspapers, and/or magazines outside of school, but only 4½ minutes reading French books and other materials. – J. Claude Romney, David M. Romney, and Helen M. Menzies. *Canadian Modern Language Review* 51, 3, April 1995, pp. 474–511.

Engage your child in writing

In any language, one of the keys to developing accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation is to be an avid reader and listener. Those who are frequently exposed to good examples of a language develop a sense of what looks and sounds correct.

The other key to correct writing is motivation. The student who really wants to communicate his ideas, thoughts and feelings and who sees it as a personally-meaningful activity will be more inclined to strive for accuracy.

Your child will begin by experimenting with letters he or she knows, often using just one or two to represent a word—a good sign that they're beginning to understand the relationship between those squiggles on the page and the words we speak. At this stage, they may write letters upside down and/or backwards, as a strong sense of direction and order only develop with time. Gradually, they'll try to write more and more the way they hear and see the words. These temporary and invented spellings are a natural progression towards conventional spelling.

The development of punctuation and grammar skills will follow a similar course. School lessons and frequent reading will move your child to greater and greater accuracy and complexity of thought. Keep a folder with some samples of their work, noting the date on the back of each item. Looking back from time to time, you should see real signs of progress.

Some everyday activities which can engage your child in writing:

- helping you prepare your grocery list (if his or her spelling is still weak, they can copy names from package labels);
- writing thank-you notes for birthday and other special occasions (if the recipient might not understand because your child's message is in French, encourage him or her to draw a little illustration and/or provide an explanation in your own note);
- preparing invitations for family get-togethers;
- adding notes to your letters, and later writing on their own to relatives and friends;
- helping you put together a family or personal photograph album with written captions for the pictures.

Make writing fun by providing a variety of tools: paper of different sizes and colours, index cards, cardboard from shirts and nylons, stick-on notes, graph paper, pencils, pens with different colours of ink, crayons, pencil crayons, felt markers, paint and brushes, stencils for tracing large letters. Don't forget pencil sharpeners, erasers, liquid paper. Your child might cut words out of magazine headlines and paste them together to form sentences. The use of a computer to create stories and illustrations can be quite engaging as well. You're limited only by your imagination—theirs and yours!

Some ways to encourage writing:

- let your child see you writing often, whether it's letters, reminder lists, thank-you notes, recipes, or work you've brought home;

Learning to write

- write notes to your child and place them on their pillow or in their lunch—they'll come to understand the pleasure that receiving a written communication can bring and they may begin to write some notes to you (also, "clean me" or "pick me up" notes in appropriate spots are a non-confrontational way to communicate);
- encourage relatives to write to your child and, especially, to respond to his or her notes and cards.

Word games and crossword puzzles are wonderful ways for children to improve their language skills. However, you may need to delay introducing these in English until after Grade 3. If your French is adequate, or your child has other French-speaking children to play with, consider obtaining some French versions. In the meantime, oral word games are a fun way to extend your child's English vocabulary. And memory games (such as card games) will help to develop their ability to recall and visualize.

Ensure your child has adequate references

See Will my child need French resources at home?

Similarities and differences

Similarities and differences between written English and French for your reference:

abbreviations: In English, an abbreviation is always followed by a period. In French, a period follows an abbreviation only if the last letter is not included in the abbreviation (e.g., Monsieur becomes M. because the final r is not part of the abbreviation, while Madame becomes Mme without a period, because the final e is included in the abbreviation).

capitalization: Only the first word in a title (and, of course, any name of a person or place) is capitalized (e.g., Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada is Société éducative de visites et d'échanges au Canada).

The days of the week, months of the year, and names of languages are not capitalized.

contractions: In English, letters are dropped and replaced by an apostrophe for the sake of brevity (e.g., don't), but this is not done in French. Where an apostrophe is used, it replaces a vowel because two succeeding vowels make pronunciation difficult (e.g., qui il becomes qu'il).

gender: In French, all nouns are either masculine or feminine. This means that every noun is preceded by le or un (masculine the, a/an) or la, une (feminine the, a/an). The feminine form of some nouns is indicated by an added final e (ami and amie).

In addition, the adjective must "agree" with the gender of the noun, which means a change to its spelling and sometimes its pronunciation (e.g., le chien brun, la table brune).

money and numbers: are written with spaces between the hundreds, a comma for decimals, and the $ sign at the end (e.g., 2,567.13 would be 2 567,13 and $1,000.45 would be 1 000,45 $)

number agreement: The article ('the' or 'a') and the adjective must "agree" with the noun in number (e.g., le chien brun, les trois chiens bruns)

paragraph structure: This is the same in both languages.

possession: French does not use 's to indicate possession, but instead uses de (of) (e.g., John's book, le livre de Jean).

punctuation: This is almost exactly the same, except that you might see the symbols « » instead of " " around quotations.

sentence structure: This is essentially the same in both languages. You might notice that in French the adjective tends to follow rather than precede the noun (e.g., the brown dogs is les chiens bruns). Questions are formulated in a slightly different fashion (e.g., Do you speak? is Parlez-vous?) and there are a few other variations. However, in both languages, the concept of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc. is identical.

Note that the French word for sentence is phrase (pronounced fraz), so the English language arts teacher must clarify the difference between the terms for a complete sentence and a sentence fragment.

spelling: There are a few elements in addition to those mentioned in As you watch your child read in French and What your child must learn about English that the English language arts teacher will clarify:

- The pronunciations of the letters g and j are reversed in the two languages. This can cause confusion in dictations and spelling when it sounds as though a student is using the wrong letter but is actually only confusing the names.
- Likewise, the name of the letter i in French is the same as the name of the letter e in English.
- The letter q can be used alone in French but never in English, where it must be followed by a u.

verbs: If you studied French, you will remember that the verb system is more complex than the English one; however, students quickly learn to use a verb reference book. (The good news is that French spelling is far more consistent than English spelling, and doesn't have the many exceptions to rules and different sounds for the same symbol.)

For more information

The “For Parents” section of the Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch website

Many good French/English dictionaries include introductions to French grammar and pronunciation.

The secondary years and beyond

The importance of the secondary years

Remaining in French immersion throughout secondary school is important if your child is to achieve sufficient proficiency to feel at ease using the language in a variety of situations, pursue further study with French as the language of instruction, or accept employment which involves the use of French.

The objectives of a continuing immersion program are to expand a student's French language skills and cultural awareness in keeping with his or her increasing intellectual maturity, social development and knowledge base. To meet these objectives, a program should offer:

- at least 40% of instructional time in French in grades 10–12,[1] including some French studies in each semester throughout high school;
- a variety of language-rich subjects taught in French (in addition to the core subjects, life skills courses, drama, career and technology studies, and even physical education, with its greater emphasis at the secondary level on rules and theory, provide excellent opportunities for vocabulary and language growth);
- a good supply of French reference and audiovisual materials, computer software, textbooks and books for leisure reading.

> … research has shown that in order to retain a second language, it helps to have learned as much as possible to begin with. The level of proficiency that learners reach has emerged as one key indicator of their future level of retained proficiency … Lack of use of the language does appear to lead to a certain amount of decline for learners of both higher and lower levels of proficiency, but the corollary is that the more one knows of the language, the less one stands to lose in proportion to what was originally learned ….[2]

Decisions, decisions ...

You made the initial decision to enrol your child in early French immersion. By Grade 6, he or she will want to have some say in their education, and by the time they're ready to plan for senior high school, they'll likely have some very definite ideas about their program choices. Whether to continue their studies in French is one of them.

- We suggest you tackle this together.
- First, review your original reasons for wanting your child to learn French (or, if he or she is in late immersion, their reasons for entering the program).
- Talk together about his or her own goals and plans for the future (see What are the goals of French immersion? and the "For students" section of the Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch website).
- Next, compare perceptions, yours as a parent and his or her own as a student, of your child's proficiency in French and the value of the experiences he or she has had with the language so far.

Many students begin to feel insecure and frustrated at about this stage—while their parents believe they are already completely bilingual! Work together to put their language learning into perspective.

- Then, investigate the opportunities available to them by looking at high school course offerings, attending open houses and information meetings, and talking to school counsellors.

Your encouragement and confidence in your child's ability to continue his or her studies in French will be important as they explore their options.

What factors might influence your child's decision?

As you gather information and explore the possibilities with your child, many questions and concerns will no doubt arise. The loss of immersion students, particularly at the senior secondary level, concerns educators and parents who recognize that the full benefits of the program are not realized until the end of Grade 12.

Here are some things you and your child should know as you weigh the choices:

- The belief that a student will achieve better grades in high school if he studies in English is a common misperception which has no foundation in research.
- The concern that students who study mathematics and the sciences in French in high school will be confused by English terms at the post-secondary level is unfounded. Most scientific and mathematical terms are based on Latin or a person's name and are therefore very similar in both English and French (for example, photosynthesis and *la photosynthèse*, Pascal's triangle and *le triangle de Pascal*). Also, the French names of chemicals more often correspond directly with their symbols than do their English names, making the periodic table easier to learn in French and to remember if you know both languages (e.g., the periodic symbol for iron is Fe, iron in French is *le fer*). Immersion students who have later studied math and science in both languages report little or no difficulty with terminology.
- Grade 12 immersion students in Alberta have the option of writing provincial department of education diploma examinations in the language of their choice, either English or French. This means that, for example, if a student takes Grade 12 social studies in French he or she may, if they prefer, write the diploma exam in English.
- French language arts (FLA) is the intended French course for immersion students. This continues to parallel English language arts throughout the secondary years, refining immersion students' French language skills and exposing them to French literature. If your board or the school you choose does not offer at least this minimum opportunity for immersion students to continue to study French, then check carefully before choosing a core French course (called "French as a Second Language" in Alberta). The goals of high school core French courses are different from FLA course goals, and core French offers varying levels of French.

What are school boards doing to help?

Many boards are finding creative ways to improve their programs to better meet the needs of students and encourage students to continue their studies in French throughout high school. Here are some examples:

- Many high schools now promote their continuing immersion programs by holding information meetings for parents and special sessions for students. Some have senior high immersion students visit the younger students to explain the program, talk about other aspects of their school (such as clubs, sports, and music programs), and answer questions. In the spring, the senior students may host an open house, providing an opportunity for younger students to tour the school, sample classes, talk to teachers, and meet their future classmates from other immersion schools in the district. Such activities help students accept moving to a new school and establish a supportive peer group.
- Your child's efforts in French should be acknowledged. In Alberta, the high school transcript indicates which courses were taken in French.
- Some dual-track high schools include special acknowledgement of the graduating immersion students in their awards ceremonies or organize a separate opportunity for those students (and sometimes their families) to celebrate.
- Trips, exchanges, or other out-of-school French activities are arranged for secondary students to give them an opportunity to experience the real-life benefits of their French skills. This is sometimes all the encouragement they need to continue their studies in French until graduation.
- Students can be provided with English-French terminology lists.
- Schedules can be arranged so that continuing immersion students can take advantage of a variety of complimentary ("optional") courses. For instance, one school has offered a full-year English language arts course (rather than a one-semester course) for French immersion students registered in its band program, while courses offered in French were scheduled over both semesters. Another innovation seen in some secondary schools is a combined French language arts/social studies full-year course (called "humanities").
- Some senior high schools offer immersion students the opportunity to take a "partial International Baccalaureate" (I.B.) program while continuing to study some subjects in French. Others offer Advanced Placement (A.P.) courses in French where there is sufficient interest.
- In larger centers, senior high students are encouraged to attend the French for the Future youth forums. In smaller centers or at the junior high level, Franconnexion Sessions can be organized.
- Some high school and elementary teachers jointly organize events involving immersion students. In one example, during workshops involving oral practice and exposure to the local Francophone culture, Grade 12 students serve as language models and even facilitate sessions for their Grade 7 counterparts. In another, high school students present their French language arts projects (such as fairy tales they have written) to young students. These sorts of activities serve to enhance the

language learning and the motivation of both groups of students. They also address the need expressed by many high school students for more opportunities to speak French.

- Distance education ("cyberhigh") can give very small classes or individuals who have scheduling conflicts the opportunity to continue their studies in French.

At the secondary level, just as in elementary school, parental involvement and commitment are essential to the success of French immersion. If you or your child aren't satisfied with the high school program offered in your area, or if changes to the program would encourage more students to continue, make your concerns known to your principal, school council and school board. Be prepared to involve the students and to work with other parents for a better continuing immersion program.

After Grade 12

While the learning of any language is a lifelong experience, when your child graduates from French immersion at the end of high school, he or she should have reached a level of proficiency that will allow them to enjoy the benefits of bilingualism while continuing to develop their skills.

> Once muscles have been developed, they should go on being exercised or they will lose their strength. Whatever your immersion experience may have been, if you want to maintain or improve your French, you must continue to use it.[3]

Continuing study of French

Opportunities to continue studies in French range from the usual French courses offered by college and university language departments through "immersion" university courses to attendance at French language institutions in Canada and abroad. Enquire about any particular accommodations made for immersion graduates (see Post-secondary Resources).

Look into the fellowships available for postsecondary studies in French, as well as bursaries and scholarships that might be available through specific institutions. Bilingual students attending university in Ottawa can apply for part-time work on Parliament Hill.

Explore is a five-week intensive language-learning course to be taken in the spring or summer. Participants must have completed at least Grade 11. They receive a bursary covering tuition fees, instructional materials, meals, and accommodation.

Many other agencies offer French courses for adults, including postsecondary continuing education departments and the Alliance française.

Living the language

Spending time in a French milieu is an excellent way to enhance language skills and cultural understanding. For a window on the wide range of opportunities for young adults both within Canada and abroad, see the "For students" section of the Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch website.

The secondary years and beyond

Work experience opportunities

A number of governments and agencies in Canada offer opportunities for young adults to gain work experience while improving their second official language. For links to many of these programs, see the "For students" section of the Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch website.

Within your community

Encourage your graduate to continue to avail himself or herself of the many resources that exist for using French on a day-to-day basis, such as television, newspapers and magazines, movies and theatre, cultural events, clubs, volunteer opportunities, etc. Your local Francophone association is an excellent place to enquire about activities, events, and contacts with other Francophone groups. Francalta is an online calendar of French cultural activities taking place in various localities in Alberta.

For more information

Alberta Education online mathematics glossaries for students in grades 7–12: English to French and French to English

Alberta Learning Information Service – a wealth of resources to help students plan for postsecondary and careers

The CBC radio program *C'est la vie* features a French "word of the week" with definitions and common expressions using that word. A catalogue of past words is also provided.

French for the Future – supports and motivates Canadian students on their path towards bilingualism

Post-secondary Opportunities – Handbook for French Immersion Administrators, Alberta Education, Chapter 9

Post-secondary Resources, Canadian Parents for French

Support Agencies and What They Offer – Handbook for French Immersion Administrators, Alberta Education, Chapter 10

Notes

[1] Guide to Education, Alberta Education, 2011-12, p. 47.

[2] Harley, Birgit. "Maintaining French as a Second Language in Adulthood." *The Canadian Modern Language Review* 50(4), June 1994, p. 689.

[3] Lapkin, Sharon, Merrill Swain and Valerie Argue. *French Immersion: The Trial Balloon That Flew*. OISE Press (co-sponsored by Canadian Parents for French), 1983, p. 17.

The importance of French outside of school

A living language

As successful as it is, the immersion classroom is an artificial setting in which to learn a second language. Children need to experience French as a living language, to associate it with a broad range of people (not just teachers), and to learn about the everyday life and culture of their Francophone peers (not just folklore).

> We call it French immersion, but in reality they are immersed in English, with a long swim in French five days a week, ten months a year. It takes children a long time to master their first language, and although learning a second language is faster, it will take them a long time … to acquire a true knowledge of French, the knowledge of what 'sounds right' in French. … You can help your children learn French in the same way as you helped them to learn English—by providing experiences with the language.[1]

After the elementary years, the amount of time spent learning in French decreases, and that time is often limited to subjects such as mathematics, language arts and social studies. Interesting French activities outside of school become increasingly important in motivating students to continue their second language studies and in exposing them to a broad range of topics and social situations.

Cultural exposure is an important part of these experiences.

> Culture is the general context and way of life. It is the behaviours and beliefs of a community of people whose history, geography, institutions, and commonalities are distinct and distinguish them to a greater or lesser degree from all other groups.
>
> Cultural content adds to the authenticity of communicative teaching in two ways. Firstly, speaking French is more than speaking English with French words. There is a cultural context to language which includes things such as regional accents, gestures, proper social forms, *niveaux de langue* [levels of language], sensitive values, etc. The cultural dimension will make communication truly authentic. Secondly, to communicate, one must communicate about something. … Cultural themes are appropriate because they add to the student's preparation for effective communication with Francophones.[2]

When choosing French language activities, remember to include those which will expose the French learner to the cultural aspects of language and to Francophone peers and role models.

Bring French into your home

Including some French in your everyday home life early on will help to make it a habit throughout your child's schooling. You'll learn some French, too, and that can be fun and enriching for the whole family!

The importance of French outside of school

Everyday fun

The youngest children can cut the French labels from cans and food packages and make collages with the brightly-coloured pictures (don't tell them it's a vocabulary and spelling exercise!).

Make a game by printing on cards the French names for objects in a particular room of the house (here's where your new French-English dictionary will come in handy). Have your child try to place as many labels as possible on the correct objects within a certain time. Or have a scavenger hunt with a list of objects you've looked up (don't forget to include the article, *le* or *la*, so that your child will learn whether each noun is masculine or feminine).

Here's a solution to boring car rides. Depending on your child's age, have him say a word, sentence or phrase in French. Then the rest of the family guesses what it means and tries to repeat it. You'll be surprised to discover how much your child enjoys stumping the family, and how much this helps him or her to become less inhibited about speaking French.

Car bingo can make summer trips go faster. Have the children make up identical bingo cards with the French words for objects they might see along the way (*un chien*, *une maison blanche*, *un lac*). Half the players take the left side of the road, the others the right side. The first team to check off every object is the winner.

Reading

French reading materials are a must. Just as your child's English literacy skills are enhanced by reading in English, so reading in French will improve his or her vocabulary, grammar, spelling and creative ability in that language.

Once your child learns to read in English, you may find that he or she loses enthusiasm for reading in French. Having a variety of French reading materials around the house will help to maintain your child's interest in them. French books and magazines are available for all ages and interests. French newspapers may interest them when they're older and help with current affairs study in school (they also advertise local French social and cultural events he or she may want to take in). Even comic books provide exposure to the language for the more reluctant reader.

> Many families have successfully encouraged French reading by allowing their children to read in bed for half an hour before lights-out—if they read in French.

Many schools hold bilingual book fairs and/or give parents the opportunity to purchase French books from monthly flyers. For other sources of French reading materials see the "For students" section of the Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch website.

Music

> By its nature 'music,' and more specifically 'songs,' make learning the French language as easy and pleasant as playing a game. … Songs encourage the acquisition of spoken French because they develop aural and oral skills. ... Repetition of French songs gives the child an opportunity to pronounce sounds that do not exist in the English language….[3]

The importance of French outside of school

Music and music videos have been developed especially for immersion students by many Francophone artists. Family sing-a-longs can be great fun while driving or while sitting around the campfire—ask your child to teach you a few of his favourites to add to the family's repertoire. When he or she is older, encourage them to listen to popular French music by contemporary artists, because while secondary immersion students know they're quite capable of speaking with French teachers, they're often concerned that they'd have little in common with Francophone teens.

For some sources, see the "For students" section of the Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch website.

Watching

Watching a French video can be fun and enriching at any age. The voices provide additional linguistic models, and vocabulary is developed as your child uses the action on the screen to help him or her to understand. When they're young, watching one that's already a favourite in English will help them with word recognition. Encourage an older student to turn on the captioning on DVDs, to watch the French words as they're being spoken.

Check local television listings for programs of interest. Begin with programs designed for young children; when they're older, encourage them to watch sports in French (Mom or Dad can watch, too!), music programs, quiz shows, and even—as they begins high school social studies—news reports.

Board and computer games

A variety of board games are available in French. Younger children can use a French visual dictionary, and parents who don't know French might be allowed a French-English dictionary.

A variety of computer games and software is widely available for all ages, so why not encourage your child to play one French game for every English one? (See the "Parents & Students" section of the Canadian Parents for French website.)

Contests and competitions

There are many contests designed especially for French-second-language students or which accept entries in either of Canada's official languages. Some are designed to be integrated into classroom work, but others do not involve school. They address varied interests, and some offer significant prizes. See the "For students" section of the Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch website.

Visitors

Need a babysitter? Find an older French immersion student and ask him or her to be sure to speak with your child in French.

Check with your local college, university or language school, as they often need temporary accommodation for students learning English. This allows a two-way exchange of language, and your family can enjoy having a Francophone as a temporary member of your household.

The importance of French outside of school

Enjoy French in your community

Once you start investigating, you'll likely be amazed by the opportunities to hear and use French within your local community or nearby!

Canadian Parents for French community chapters often organize French activities for the whole family: tobogganing and skating parties, parties for various special events, concerts by Francophone entertainers, family dances, and so on. These are fun for all, with the added bonus of giving you a chance to hear the children using their French.

Sports clubs, dance and music lessons, scouts and guides may be offered in French and provide a good opportunity for immersion students to spend time with their Francophone peers.

Parks and Recreation programs are sometimes offered in French, or can be if enough interest is shown by parents and children. And many children's festivals include French performances.

French theatre, movies and concerts are especially helpful in broadening the cultural perspective of immersion students. Many communities with a significant Francophone population offer a good variety of such entertainment for both children and adults.

Traditional celebrations such as *Le Festival de la cabane à sucre* (the annual "sugaring-off" party) and *Carnaval* (winter carnival) give glimpses into French-Canadian history, folklore, cuisine and joie de vivre. Non-French-speaking members of the community are always welcome. The more your family enters into the spirit of these events, the more fun you'll all have!

Your local Francophone association is an excellent place to enquire about activities, events, and contacts with other Francophone groups. Francalta is an online calendar of French cultural activities taking place in various localities in Alberta. See also the "What's new" and "For students" sections of the Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch website.

Keeping it up over the summer

French summer camp is a wonderful way for immersion students to have fun in the sun (or the pouring rain, for that matter) and to practice their French while school is out. Locally there may be day camps for elementary children that offer arts and crafts, sports and games, music and stories. For summer programs in Alberta see the "For students" section of the Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch website.

If you're planning to travel or if your child visits relatives in other parts of the country during the summer, why not look into camps in other provinces? Begin by checking the websites of the various Canadian Parents for French provincial and territorial branches.

Across Canada and in Europe, there's a wonderful variety of residential French camps for most ages and interests: cycling tours, entrepreneurship activities, nautical adventures, outdoor experiences, space camp, and more. These are excellent ways to motivate students, while improving not only their language skills

but also their confidence in using French. See the "For Students" section of the Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch website.

Travel and tourism

Travel can bring a language alive! A family trip isn't just an opportunity for your children to hear and practice their French—they can write to tourism offices for brochures, look up information on the Internet, and help the rest of the family plan the itinerary.

All national parks and many national historic sites offer information, pamphlets, tours and activities in French. Look for other museums, historical villages and landmarks which might provide information in French.

There's a multitude of attractions in Quebec, of course: the winter *Carnaval* in Québec City, with everyone's favourite, *Bonhomme Carnaval* (February); the historic sites of Québec City; the sophistication of Montreal; *La Ronde* (the large amusement park in Montreal); historic villages and churches; and many different regions, from the rolling Gatineau Hills to Gaspé, with its famous Rocher Percé. Start with the *Bonjour Québec* website.

But don't forget the other provinces—including your own! No matter where you go in Canada there are opportunities to use French. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Alberta communities with a strong Francophone heritage, such as Beaumont, Falher, Legal, Morinville, Plamondon, St. Paul; *La Fête franco-albertaine*, held around Canada Day in a different community each year;
- *Le Festival du bois* in Coquitlam (just outside Vancouver) each March;
- *La Fête fransaskoise*, held each summer in a different francophone milieu; Regina's Royal Canadian Mounted Police Heritage Centre;
- the lively *Festival du voyageur* held in Winnipeg each February;
- *Le Festival franco-ontarien* throughout Ontario each June;
- Parliament Hill, museums, Rideau Hall, Gatineau Park, and so much more in Canada's National Capital Region;
- the Acadian regions of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, including the Acadian Historical Village in Caraquet, N.B.; the colourful village of Chéticamp on Cape Breton Island, N.S.; and the rural communities of P.E.I.'s western region;
- Newfoundland's unique French-Canadian communities, such as Cap St-George on the Port au Port Peninsula.

Exchanges and visits in Canada and abroad

For individual students

There's no better language experience than being submerged in the everyday life and culture of a native speaker. Visits and exchanges offer the perfect opportunity for older students and young adults to enhance their French skills while sharing in family life, shopping, going to parties and perhaps attending school in a French community.

Programs range from one week to several months or even a year in duration. Some involve "paired" students spending time in each others' homes. There are programs for individuals, for groups and even for families, both in Canada and abroad—take your pick! For links to many such opportunities see the "For Students" section of the Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch website.

For school groups

Some schools and parents' organizations arrange class exchanges or trips. Fundraising projects are often organized to help reduce the cost. These activities often help students make the decision to continue their French studies in high school or university.[4] Group trips don't offer all of the language opportunities experienced during exchanges or lengthy visits, but they can be very worthwhile if the organizers and chaperones encourage the use of French and arrange for billeting in French homes or activities with young Francophones.

Notes

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2 LeBlanc, Clarence, Claudine Courtel and Pierre Trescases. "Syllabus Culture." *Étude nationale sur les programmes de français de base*. Association canadienne des professeurs de langues secondes, 1990, pp. xii–xiii.

3 Pinel, Suzanne. "Learning French through Music." *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!*, Canadian Parents for French, 1990, pp. 37–38.

4 Mady, Callie. "English-French School Group Exchanges in Canada and Their Long Term Impact." Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada, 2009.

Why isn't my young child happy at school?[1]

Many parents wonder if they're doing the right thing when they enrol their children in French immersion, and this self-doubt can escalate whenever a child seems unhappy. The first reaction may be to blame the program. This is unhelpful if something else is the real problem, as is usually the case. Blaming the immersion program might delay dealing with the true cause of the unhappiness—and perhaps deny a child the gift of a second language.

If your child seems unhappy, how can you get at the root of the problem? Considering the following questions might help.

Is he or she enjoying Kindergarten?

In Kindergarten, your child will be concentrating most of their energy on adapting to the demands of school life. To them, the language will likely be incidental. If they complain about not wanting to go to school or not liking school, or seem especially tired after school, chances are it isn't the French immersion program that is causing the problem. It could be your child's separation from you, loss of daycare buddies, or getting used to the classroom rules and routines which is upsetting them. Try asking them about their day (for example, what they like doing, what they don't like doing), and talk with their teacher about how they're settling in and what you can do to help. See "The gentle approach."

Does my child feel uncomfortable with the teacher?

Especially in the early grades, the teacher-student relationship is vital. To understand what is bothering him or her, encourage them to talk about school. Meet with the teacher, and, if possible, observe the class in action. Keep lines of communication open in order to address concerns as soon as they arise.

Is it early in the school year?

Every year begins with an adjustment period. How long it takes depends on the child's personality and many other factors. Because French language teachers come from many different places, a child may have trouble understanding the new teacher's accent and turns of phrase. Time will solve this, so counsel patience. Meeting people from other parts of the country and the world is one of the enriching aspects of French immersion.

Does my child have friends and enjoy play times?

Or does he or she feel lonely, teased, or picked on? A child's self-esteem is of primary importance, and, for many, friends can be one of the best parts of attending school. If this is more than an occasional worry, take action to head off long-term problems. Invite classmates for visits and outings. Continuing playground problems should be reported to the school.

Does my child seem overtired or worried about being far from home?

Especially if your child is bused, he or she may need more sleep, fewer extracurricular activities, or more high-energy snacks in the morning. If you can drop in or volunteer sometimes, he or she will be thrilled and feel more secure. Young children also need the security of knowing that someone will collect and care for them if they become ill at school.

Why isn't my young child happy at school?[1]

Does my child usually feel well at school?

Or does he or she have symptoms of allergies and environmental sensitivities such as chronic feelings of tiredness, headaches, stomach aches, a runny nose, sore throat or eyes, or "colds" that drag on and on? Perhaps he's bothered by something in the school (dust, moulds, cleaning products, duplicating fluids, chemicals from labs, etc.). Consult your family doctor and/or an allergist. Read about new research and suggestions.

Does the teacher complain that my child doesn't sit still, doesn't concentrate, daydreams, works slowly?

Find out whether this is a minor problem or a major one that seriously interferes with learning. All young children find it hard to sit still; only a few have ongoing difficulty. A daydreamer might be bright and bored. A slow worker might be super-conscientious. If your child is doing fairly well anyway, don't worry.

On the other hand, a Grade 1 student may not be ready for the demands of school because of his personality, background or maturity level. Or there may be a learning disability that requires diagnosis and help.

In any case of difficulty with schoolwork, cooperate with the teacher to find solutions. Try not to make your child feel worried or pressured to perform beyond his or her ability. Self-confidence is essential for learning. If a child doesn't feel confident that he or she can succeed, they won't even want to try.

For more, see: But my child is ...!

Is this a school problem or a home problem?

Home is the most important thing in a young child's life. If he or she is worried or unhappy about that, they won't be able to concentrate on school work.

Try to establish a home atmosphere where feelings are shared and problems are aired. Make it easy for your child to confide in you by being available, interested and non-judgmental. Also, don't assume that what seems small and unimportant to you is the same for your child. To him or to her, it may seem huge. If you treat it lightly, they may stop telling you things that you need to hear. You have to play this one by ear, because overreacting is also risky. Your child may simply want a sympathetic listener and be horrified if you rush off to confront someone, or otherwise "make waves."

If there is a problem at home—such as a serious illness, the death of a family member or a well-loved pet, a separation—you may want to consider letting the teacher know so that he or she can take this into account when dealing with your child.

Is there a specific school situation which needs to be addressed?

Of course, there could be a difficulty connected with the actual school program, with the way certain classes or subjects are being taught, shortages of books or other supplies, and so on. These are often the same sorts of problems that could arise in the English program, and the same advice applies. Work with

others—the teacher, the principal, other parents—to get them resolved. Your school council and an active Canadian Parents for French chapter can be very helpful in addressing a specific school situation.

Keep things in perspective!

Of course, you won't face all these problems, but over the course of the years you may meet some of them. No one ever promised that parenting would be easy! But it is very rewarding. If you keep the lines of communication open, respect your child's opinions, encourage independence, help when you can, and don't give up on loving, some day you'll be the proud friend of a bilingual adult—and the problems that once loomed so large will almost be forgotten.

Notes

[1] This chapter is adapted from an article written by Margaret Fitch of Calgary. A mother who has seen five children through the school system (early immersion, late immersion, and the English program), Mrs. Fitch has also taught at the elementary level and been involved with preschool programs, a day care and an alternative elementary school. The article first appeared in the *CPF Alberta Newsletter* 40, fall 1993, p. 8.

Diverse needs in French immersion

Today's French immersion classrooms are as diverse as those delivering other programs. Experts such as Fred Genesee[1] believe there is no reason to exclude students who are struggling from French immersion programs.

A student's ability to succeed in a French immersion program depends upon many factors, including motivation, support and environmental factors. If appropriate supports are in place, students with a variety of special education needs can succeed in the program.

Students with language or reading difficulties or a learning disability can often thrive in French immersion. As these difficulties are pervasive (i.e., they will exist regardless of language of instruction and in all languages learned by the student), the student may not struggle more in French immersion than he or she would in an English-only program. Students struggling with reading or language may even be at an advantage because the repetition and review of basic skills in French may be beneficial. Furthermore, skills and strategies learned to overcome language or reading difficulties are transferable from one language to another, meaning that interventions can benefit the student for both languages.

Students with cognitive disabilities can also benefit from learning a second language in an immersive setting if they are provided with the appropriate supports. These students will learn more slowly and will require adaptations, but they will also enjoy benefits from learning a second language.

Students with behaviour difficulties or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder often require behavioural interventions, but their ability to learn languages is not usually impaired. Behaviour issues may be addressed using strategies similar to those used in other programs.

Students who are gifted may benefit from the opportunities that French immersion education presents. However, some differentiating of instruction for these students is often required in order to best meet their needs.

French immersion may not be appropriate for students with a significant delay or disorder in their first language or with significant hearing impairments, unless these can be rectified by adjusting the educational environment (e.g., by installing an amplification system or other equipment).

What is “inclusive education”?

Inclusion means that all students have equitable opportunities to be included in the typical learning environment or a program of choice, such as French immersion. Inclusive schools recognize and celebrate diversity, value all students and staff, and see differences as valuable resources to support learning.

What is “differentiated instruction”?

Differentiation of instruction means using a variety of instructional approaches as well as varying assignments, assessments and time allotments for completing tasks in order to better meet all the needs in a classroom.

What are the early warning signs?

Following are some signals about which you should confer with the teacher:

Kindergarten - your child often has difficulty expressing himself or herself clearly (that is, getting his or her meaning across) in their first language, or difficulty articulating some sounds in their mother tongue[2]

Grade 1
- your child has difficulty paying attention even for short periods of time
- he or she is unable to echo words and phrases in French
- very little letter/sound recognition

Grade 2
- very little word identification
- he or she has difficulty paying attention for extended periods of time

Grade 3
- they often have difficulty understanding or recalling the information from a story that they have heard or read
- they often have difficulty giving information about something that they have just seen or experienced
- difficulty with phonetic analysis (that is, identifying or separating the sounds of words)

Grade 4/5
- they are still reversing letters
- their difficulty with phonetic analysis hinders comprehension

At any time
- continuing unhappiness at school
- ongoing behavioural or social problems
- sudden changes in behaviour
- obvious lack of confidence
- a definite lack of interest in learning French.

On the other hand, it's not unusual ...

… for children who are exceptionally “bright” to be frustrated at first because they’re used to understanding easily or to having their curiosity satisfied quickly;

… for some shy or anxious children to be reluctant to participate in class activities, and for their speaking skills in French to develop slowly at first as a result;

… for the youngest children in the class and for boys to experience some delays in acquiring readiness skills and academic skills (research shows that some boys do not develop psycholinguistic abilities as quickly as girls).

However, none of this means that a child should not remain in the French immersion program. In fact, it might lead you and the teacher to identify and deal with these sorts of factors earlier than you would in the English stream.

How are problems approached?

Whether you or the teacher first perceives that something may be hindering your child's academic progress, the following is a general outline of what should happen next.

> It is likely that there will be differences in teachers' and parents' experiences of a child. No one individual holds all of the information that may be needed to better meet the needs of a given learner. Nor does any one individual have the 'one and only' solution. A positive, child-centered outcome results when all stakeholders act as contributors and co-participants who work collaboratively and stay committed over time.[3]

1. If you're the first to raise the question, make an appointment with the teacher (if your child has more than one teacher, you might request that they all be involved). Give the teacher an indication of the reason for the meeting, so that he or she can be prepared for the discussion. Come prepared to give examples which illustrate the reason for your concern.

2. Regardless of who asks for the initial discussion, come with an open mind. Remember that you and the teacher see your child from different perspectives, in different types of situations. Children tend to behave differently in group situations and with their peers than they do at home. You know your child better, but the teacher works with children on a daily basis, and knows the curriculum. The process of comparing notes in order to identify similarities and differences between your child's behaviour, achievement, and attitudes at home and at school is a very important first step in narrowing down and identifying the most likely source(s) of the problem.

3. You and the teacher should agree to a plan of action, for both school and home. This should include a time frame and some objectives, that is, what you both hope these strategies will accomplish. It might include gathering more information, for example by having your child's health, eyesight and hearing checked (be sure to let the health professionals know why this is being done), or interviewing others with whom your child is in regular contact (such as a club leader, sports coach, or babysitter).

4. Keep a record of what was said and decided at this and any further meetings. You may want to start a notebook so that you aren't relying on your memory. Such a journal would also be useful for noting your observations of your child. You are the one who sees your child day in and day out, in a wide variety of circumstances. You will be able to use these notes to provide your child's current and future teachers with a much more complete picture than they will get during ten months in a classroom.

5. Carry out your part of the action plan to the best of your ability. Remember that your moods and reactions will influence your child's attitude: be positive whenever he's anywhere within earshot, keeping any concerns and frustrations for times when he cannot overhear you voicing them.

Speak with your child about the situation. Listen to and acknowledge his or her feelings. Help them to understand that everyone learns at different rates (for example, babies walk and talk at different times), that everyone has different strengths and weaknesses, that there are many different learning styles, and that the brain is an extremely complex organ (just imagine all that it does!). You, the teacher, your child, and perhaps some other "helpers" are together going to develop a set of strategies especially tailored just for him or her.

6. Even if you believe your child has made significant progress, have a follow-up meeting with the teacher to again compare notes. This will allow you both to determine how to build on your success.

   If your strategies are not accomplishing what you'd hoped, it's time to do more brainstorming. At this point, the teacher may wish to ask other school staff to help develop new solutions. This gives the teacher a pool of experience and suggestions as well as some new perspectives to draw on.

7. Repeat steps 4. to 6.

8. If several strategies have been tried but have failed to address the problem, it's probably time to have your child assessed according to the referral procedure in place within your school or district. You have the right to give written consent for any formal evaluations to be conducted.

   The objective of assessment is not to label your child, but to provide additional information on which to develop new strategies. Assessment is meant to identify a child's needs and to determine how best to address those needs. It should go beyond a statement of his current achievement levels to a diagnosis of the underlying problem and an understanding of his learning abilities and styles. Among the many areas which may be tested are: long- and short-term memory, auditory and visual processing and discrimination, reasoning skills, and so on. For more, see: Assessments: in English or in French?

9. Before your child is tested, speak with him or her about this process. Make sure that he or she understands that this is not a question of right or wrong, marks or failure, that these are simply tools to help you and the teacher have a clearer picture of how he or she learns. The tests will help everyone understand how to build on his or her preferred ways of learning and to work on his or her weaknesses.

10. The pattern of identifying, prioritizing, implementing, and evaluating different strategies should continue. As appropriate, a broad range of supports may be involved: trained volunteers, other students (peer tutoring, cooperative learning, etc.), teacher aides or assistants, education consultants, counsellors, doctors, speech pathologists, and so on.

    While some difficulties are relatively straightforward, others can be complex and multifaceted. In the latter case, it could take several months and the input of a number of people before you fully understand how your child can best be helped. You shouldn't feel discouraged as long as honest efforts to work toward a solution are being made. Try to put these difficult weeks into the context of your child's whole life.

How can I help?

Keep the lines of communication open

Effective communication between you, your child, and the professionals can only help your child to overcome the difficulty. Do whatever you can to foster coordinated efforts. The worst thing for your child is for you and the others around him to be pulling in different directions.

You have the right to know:

- what types of testing have been done, the results of those tests, and the meaning of the results;
- how often your child has been observed, by whom, and what was reported;
- how your child behaves in various situations at school;
- the information in your child's school files;
- what strategies are being implemented to deal with his or her difficulty (and by whom), and how their effectiveness is being evaluated.

The school and any other professionals involved need to know about:

- your child's developmental history and his or her current behaviour and achievements out of school;
- any relevant medical conditions;
- any other significant stresses in your child's life;
- whatever steps you've taken or may be taking to help your child.

Seek adequate assistance

You are your child's primary advocate. If you're not comfortable with the information you have received, you have the right to a second opinion.

If you're not satisfied with the support provided by the school staff (including any learning assistance or other resource people involved), it is important for both parties to meet to discuss their concerns and come to an agreement in the best interests of the child. Share your concerns with the teacher. The school principal is also available to meet with you and to hear your concerns. If, after a reasonable length of time, that does not lead to a resolution of your concerns, a process for dispute resolution and more formal appeal procedures are available. You should then contact the school district superintendent. The next step in any appeal would be to the board of school trustees. Finally, find out what your rights are under the province's School Act. See The Learning Team: A handbook for parents of children with special needs, Chapter 6: Resolving Differences.

Parent groups can also provide assistance. Your school council, a local immersion parents' association such as Canadian Parents for French, or a support group for parents of learning disabled or gifted and

talented children may be able to refer you to tutors or specialists as well as provide information and moral support.

Help your child to cope

The first step in helping your child to maintain a positive outlook is to be positive yourself. When a child is experiencing difficulties, it's common for his parents to feel inadequacy, guilt, fear, and even grief. Your best weapons against these feelings are facts: things are always more frightening when you feel helpless and don't understand. Speak with others who are knowledgeable about your child's type of difficulty. If you don't understand what a professional is telling you, ask questions. Consider joining a support group. Do some further reading.

Don't let the difficulty get out of proportion within your child's life. Ensure that your child has enough time for rest, play and activities at which he or she will experience success. Learn how to deal with stress, and teach your child these techniques—they're valuable life skills in any case.

Give your child strategies for dealing with other children. Encourage them to talk with you about any negative reactions on the part of their friends and classmates. Discuss what they might say or how they might act in these situations (you might even want to do some role-playing).

Don't let the difficulty become an excuse. Children can find a lot of reasons for not trying, including both "it's too easy" and "it's too hard." Even if your child learns very quickly, he or she still needs to understand all the steps and details, or he or she will get into difficulty later on. If your child has difficulty learning, ensure that the expectations of the work are realistic for them, and then help them to believe that they can do it.

Speak with relatives and, if appropriate, babysitters, club leaders, sports coaches, and others with whom your child is in frequent contact. Help them to understand what strategies you're using and how they can also assist your child.

Most importantly, give your child lots and lots of love and honest praise!

Assessments: in English or in French?

Because of the complexity of assessing any individual's learning strengths and challenges, it's usually necessary to use a number of different tools and then consider their cumulative results.

A number of diagnostic tests designed specifically for French immersion students are now available, but it's perfectly valid to do much of a student's assessment in English, as a large proportion of the information that you and the teacher need is not language-specific. However, it's essential that the tests be interpreted by someone with a good understanding of the immersion approach, someone who's able to judge whether and to what degree the difficulties encountered are caused by transfer and interference between languages or by the natural delays to be expected during the first few years of instruction in a second language.

Always remember that such tests are simply snapshots of specific aspects of your child. It's important to view them within the total picture of his or her functioning which you and the teacher observe on an ongoing basis.

What are the alternatives?

> Any decision to change the placement of a child must be in the interest of the child—not of the program, the parents, or the teachers.[4]

Remaining in the immersion program (even if a grade must be repeated) has the potential to offset your child's difficulty by boosting his or her self-esteem: they may be experiencing a problem in one area, but their competence in French is already better than Mom's, or an older sibling's, or the neighbour's! In addition, your child is not being denied the opportunity to acquire a second language. When they graduate from school, even in the event that they are not strong in some academic areas, they will have the asset of a high level of fluency in French.

Learning assistance

While it is usually preferable to provide assistance in French, this isn't always possible. Don't despair! Working closely with the immersion teacher, both you and a unilingual learning assistance specialist or other professional can make a tremendous difference. Remember that most learning difficulties are not language-specific. Once your child has acquired strategies to overcome them, those strategies will be transferred to the French setting when your child is shown the connections. Likewise, behavioural or social difficulties have nothing to do with the language of instruction. In any case, good coordination between the approaches used by you, by the teacher, and by any specialist(s) is very important.

If you decide to hire a tutor to work with your child out of school, it's extremely important to find someone who both understands and believes in the immersion program—whether the services are to be provided in English or in French.

Repeating a grade

While providing the opportunity to continue learning French, repeating a grade can give your child a message of failure. Generally, however, the lower the grade that is repeated (Kindergarten, Grade 1, or perhaps Grade 2), the less the impact on a child's self-esteem.

Once you're confident that this is the best decision, there's a simple message that you need to impart to your child, to friends and relatives, and to other children and adults with whom he or she will be in contact: repeating doesn't mean failure, it simply means they need more time. Express your pride in your child's accomplishments—both in and out of school—(one of which will be the ability to understand and speak French) and your confidence that with time he or she will be a successful student.

But my child is ...!

Transferring to English

Switching out of immersion could damage your child's self-image. It may even, in certain circumstances, compound the difficulty your child is experiencing. However, there are times when a transfer should probably take place.

- When leaving the program would give your child access to critical services. For example, transferring to a program which relies far less on oral communication might be indicated for a child with a serious auditory difficulty unless consistent extra assistance can be provided to deal with that problem.
- If your child is not motivated and has a negative attitude toward the program. It must be remembered that they'll learn little if they don't want to learn, whatever their level of ability is.
- If you or your spouse's concerns about the program affect your child's motivation.

Whatever the reason for your decision, try to evaluate your child's perceptions of the transfer. They may well express a sense of relief. However, if there is a feeling of failure, you will need to help them put the situation into perspective. It's not that there is anything wrong with them, there was just not a good match between their (or the family's) needs and the immersion program as it currently exists in the community. If your child is disappointed about not learning French, remind them that there will be opportunities at the secondary level, through summer programs or exchanges, and even after high school to renew their language studies. See Exchanges and visits in Canada and abroad.

You will want to ensure that the new teacher has an understanding of your child's needs and strengths, and of the strategies and accommodations that have been tried to date. The teacher should be made aware that there could be occasions when your child cannot answer a question because they are not familiar with the English term rather than because they do not understand the concept (you might even want to do some role playing with your child to help him or her learn how to deal with such a situation). The immersion teacher may be able to provide some insights into the areas in which your child could use some specific coaching in order to ease this transition.

For more information

Action on Inclusion, Alberta Education

Can French Immersion Offer an Appropriate Quality Education for Students with Diverse Learning Needs?, Alberta Education

Diversity in French Immersion Classrooms: A Quick Inclusion Guide for Teachers, Alberta Education

Gifted Canada

Inclusion of Students with Diverse Needs in French Immersion, *Handbook for French Immersion Administrators,* Alberta Education, Chapter 8

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

Making a Difference: Meeting Diverse Learning Needs with Differentiated Instruction, Alberta Education

Peer Tutoring Literacy Program, Canadian Parents for French

The Journey: A Handbook for Parents of Children Who Are Gifted and Talented, Alberta Education

The Learning Team: A Handbook for Parents of Children with Special Needs, Alberta Education

Notes

[1] Duval, S. "French Immersion: Do English Skills 'Translate?'" *Clar(!)ty*. Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network, 2008, pp. 16–19.

[2] Note that certain speech difficulties are actually helped when the child is given a fresh start in a new language and is involved in a program which depends so much on aural and oral work.

[3] Fortune, Tara Williams and Mandy R. Menke. *Struggling Learners & Language Immersion Education*. Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota, 2010, p. 109.

[4] Demers, Daniel. "Learning Disabilities and Cross-linguistic Interference in French Immersion: When to Transfer, When Not to Transfer?" Learning Disabilities Association of Manitoba and Canadian Parents for French – Manitoba Branch, 1994, p. 4.

What have graduates said about French immersion?

Immersion graduates have long been enthusiastic about the program.[1] A 1992 study in the Ottawa area reported that most were highly satisfied with their immersion experience and cited better job opportunities and functional French skills as their reasons. Many also noted a greater openness to other cultures.[2]

A similar study conducted in Saskatchewan in 1990 found that 86% of graduates were glad to have studied in French immersion and would do it again. As for deciding to place their own children in the program, 81% would "definitely" and 18% would "possibly".[3]

And when Duncan Nickerson, an immersion graduate from Calgary, informally surveyed his high school friends in 1992, they all agreed that they would do it all over again and would have felt deprived had they not been given the opportunity.[4]

Here's a sampling of what immersion graduates have said more recently:

About bilingualism

- Giving your child the opportunity to enjoy the fullness of being Canadian, being able to understand the world in a bigger way, is a great gift. I am so glad my parents gave me this chance. It has made all the difference. – Lisa Marie Perkins, Red Deer AB[5]

- [A message to current immersion students:] Bravo! The doors of opportunity will soon swing wide open for you. Work. Volunteer. Travel. No matter what you decide to do next, you will have the confidence to communicate in two universal languages. Don't underestimate that advantage. Bonne chance! – Graeme Burns, Beaumont AB[6]

- I can think in French. I don't translate. I believe this would have been much more difficult, if not impossible, without my early immersion experience. The confidence and skills I have in a French environment have generated innumerable professional and personal opportunities. I have been exposed to, and appreciate, cultures that would have otherwise been inaccessible to me. – Michelle Jones, Stony Plain AB[7]

- I spent the past year, my first following graduation from the University of Victoria, playing professional basketball in both France and England, followed by two months of travel throughout Europe …. I cannot count the times in the past year that I have consciously thanked my parents for their foresight, let alone the subconscious satisfaction I have experienced at being able to truly converse with people in their native language or, surprisingly frequently in parts of Europe, bridge the gap of communication with people whose repertoire of languages included French but not English. – Sandy Bisaro, Vancouver BC[8]

About its benefits

- I obtained a French Certificate from the University of Calgary. Then I was hired to work at Shell as a customer service representative, taking calls from customers across the country. I was interviewed in French and got the job because I spoke French. – Nichola Sollid, Calgary AB[9]

What have graduates said about French immersion?

- I have learned some Spanish and Greek. … not only did it [immersion] give me French language skills that will never leave me, it has also made learning any other language much easier. – Ben Howes, Calgary AB[10]

- I am addressing the House [of Commons] in French today, and my sister is a teacher of French, because both of us participated in a French immersion program …. I thank Canadian Parents for French and all the parents who make such an investment in their children's education. I urge all parents to consider the benefits of learning a second language at school. – James Moore, MP, Port Moody-Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam BC[11]

- Currently, I'm a medical student at the University of Western Ontario …. Over the holidays I worked in the emergency room in a small hospital in northern Ontario and I was able to communicate perfectly with all the patients, something that not all the physicians could do. It was a pretty amazing experience! I look forward to French always being a part of my life and to eventually have a practice that can accommodate patients in both languages. French has really opened up a lot of doors for me—and I'm excited to one day raise my kids proud of their two languages as well! – Julie Johnstone, Ontario[12]

- I have had the opportunity to meet so many unique people from all over the world. I have been able to converse with people from Quebec, France, Switzerland and French-speaking African countries. It is amazing where you will run into French-speaking people! – Jarod Letendre, St. Albert AB[13]

Notes

[1] See, for example:

- "Follow-up Study of French Immersion Graduates: Provincial Results (1987-88 and 1988-89 graduates)." Manitoba Education and Training, 1991. (88% would recommend the program to others – p. 22).
- McGillivray, W. Russ. "Senior Students and French – How Do They Rate Themselves?" *More French, s'il vous plaît!* Canadian Parents for French, 1985. (80% recommended early immersion, 23% late immersion, and only 2% core French – p. 89).
- "FSL: Learning French Matters in Toronto Schools." Toronto Board of Education and Canadian Parents for French – Toronto Chapter, 1993. (88% of the immersion students would make the same decision to enter the program again – p. 22).

[2] MacFarlane, Alina and Marjorie Bingham Wesche. "Immersion Outcomes: Beyond Language Proficiency." *Canadian Modern Language Review* 5, 2, January 1995, p. 269.

[3] Husum, R. and R. Bryce. "Saskatchewan French Immersion: Can we expect a second generation?" *Contact* 10, 1, February 1991, p. 9.

[4] "They'd do it again!" *CPF Alberta Newsletter* 35, summer 1992, p. 1.

[5] *CPF Alberta News* 95, Fall 2008, p. 6.

[6] *CPF Alberta News* 103, Fall 2010, p. 6.

[7] *CPF Alberta News* 95, Fall 2008, p. 6.

[8] "Basketball and French are a Fit," *CPF National News* 93, Fall 2003, p. 1.

[9] *CPF Alberta News* 95, Fall 2008, p. 4.

[10] *CPF Alberta News* 101, Spring 2010, pp. 4–5.

[11] In the House of Commons on May 31, 2001

[12] Success Stories, Canadian Parents for French, retrieved 13 March, 2011.

[13] *CPF Alberta News* 101, Spring 2010, p. 5.