

Supporting Your Child's Success
**in French Immersion
and Extended French**

Elementary Schools

A PARENT GUIDE



Ontario

Supporting Your Child's Success in French Immersion and Extended French, Kindergarten to Grade 8 is an addition to the Ontario Ministry of Education's parent guides. Other guides include *Reading and Writing with Your Child, Kindergarten to Grade 6* and *Doing Mathematics with Your Child, Kindergarten to Grade 6*.

Produced by the Ontario Ministry of Education.



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Trust the universal human capacity for language learning.

Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013

*A Framework for French as a Second Language
in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12*

What's in this guide?

This guide draws from the best knowledge and research available about language learning. It contains practical suggestions for simple, everyday things that you can do at home to enhance your child's learning in both French Immersion and Extended French.

What's the difference between Extended French and French Immersion?

Both programs are designed to help children become bilingual by teaching the curriculum in both English and French.

The French Immersion program is designed to provide students with a minimum of 3,800 hours of instruction in French by the end of Grade 8. Students learn French as a subject and French serves as the language of instruction in two or more other subjects.

The Extended French program will provide students with a minimum of 1,260 hours of instruction in French by the end of Grade 8. Students learn French as a subject and French serves as the language of instruction in at least one other subject.

Ontario's French as a Second Language Programs at a Glance

Elementary School

Program features	Extended French Program	French Immersion Program
Will French be taught as a subject to my child?	Yes.	Yes.
Will French be the language of instruction for all my child's subjects?	French is the language of instruction in at least one other subject.	French is the language of instruction in at least two or more other subjects.
How much instruction will be provided to my child in French?	At least 25 per cent of all instruction is provided in French.	At least half of all instruction is provided in French.

Secondary School

Program features	Extended French Program	French Immersion Program
Grade 9 and 10 courses	Academic courses are offered.	Academic <i>and applied</i> courses are offered.
Grade 11 and 12 courses	University preparation courses are offered.	University preparation <i>and open</i> courses are offered.
What credits can my child accumulate in French?	Seven credits of which four are French as a Second language courses and three are other subjects in which French is the language of instruction.	Ten credits in French of which four are French as a Second language courses and six are other subjects in which French is the language of instruction.
What French-language skills will my child have by the end of a four-year program?	He or she will be able to converse freely on familiar topics; will be able to read – with the occasional help of a dictionary – books, magazines, and newspapers in French; and will be able to function in a French-speaking community.	He or she will participate easily in conversations and discussions; will be able to take courses at the college or university level in which French is the language of instruction; and will be able to accept employment in which French is the working language.

For more information: *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12* <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/frameworkFLS.pdf>

What if I don't speak French?

The earlier children are exposed to language and literacy through activities like reading and writing, the more likely they are to do well at school. This is the case no matter what language they are exposed to in their early years.

Even before they start school, children acquire thinking and communication skills that enable them to learn other languages and to succeed in school. They learn those skills by hearing and speaking the language of their home – whether it is English or Portuguese, Farsi, Urdu or Chinese.

You don't need special skills to help your child learn French. Spending time with your child – talking about what he or she is thinking about and doing in his or her everyday life – will make a difference.

Please note: In this guide, the word *parents* refers to parents, guardians, caregivers and other family members who help children build language and literacy skills.

Can students learn skills in one language and transfer them to another?

Yes, yes, yes!

The goal of French Immersion and Extended French programs is to develop proficiency, not just in French but in English as well – Canada’s two official languages. This goal is based on solid research. Studies show that if your child develops abilities in French, this will help your child continue to improve in English.

There are many skills and abilities that transfer between different languages. These can include phonetic skills, comprehension strategies, higher-order thinking skills and familiarity with text formats, such as books, manuals, recipes and websites. This explains why children who are literate in one language are likely to have an advantage in learning a second. It also explains why your child’s developing proficiency in French will not limit his or her growth in mastering English.

Parents can play a big role in supporting their child’s success in French. Below are some of the literacy skills that can be transferred from one language to another.

- **Communicating effectively** – regardless of the language being used, communication makes us organize our thinking. We need to think about our audience and choose language that explains our thinking with precision.
- **Thinking imaginatively and analytically** – we use language to wonder about and imagine solutions to everyday problems, and to weigh a range of possibilities and outcomes to our actions.
- **Accessing, managing, evaluating and creating information** – languages serve as tools that allow us to receive information, build knowledge and communicate understanding. When we learn to do this in one language, we can apply it to any language we speak.
- **Understanding how we learn and think** – when we come to know *how* we think and *what* helps us learn, we grow in our ability to apply this knowledge to new learning. When we recognize our unique strengths and ways of learning, we can apply this in every language we use.

How can I help my child learn French?

There are five key things that you can do at home that will help your child to practise the skills described above and do well in French as a Second Language programs. Remember, it doesn't matter what language you speak at home, these tips will work!



Help your child become a great communicator.

Reading and writing skills start with good listening and speaking skills.

All four skills are interconnected, and the Ontario curriculum strikes a balance between them. However, it is listening and speaking – the oral communication skills – that are considered key learning a second language.

Effective oral communication involves many factors, such as choice of words, tone of voice, volume and body language. When you draw your child's attention to these elements of communication and show them in action, you provide a strong foundation for the development of effective communication skills in French, English or any other language.

Helping your child develop a broad vocabulary in English, or the language you speak at home, has added benefits. It helps develop thinking skills, teaches your child to communicate with precision and provides more opportunities to make connections with French.

2 Help your child become an imaginative and analytic thinker.

Thinking is the key to effective communication. Much of the focus in literacy skills instruction at school is on helping students learn to think critically and analytically, and to understand how their thinking supports their learning. All children, including those in French Immersion and Extended French, benefit from opportunities to deepen and strengthen these skills by using them in their own language outside school.

Imaginative and analytic thinking skills are crucial to help students meet today's high standards for literacy. Nurturing your child's natural curiosity is important in supporting the development of those skills. Let your child observe you thinking about solutions to problems. Encourage your child to question what he or she sees and hears, and reads and views. Get your child involved in considering different ways of thinking about everyday situations. You can also help your child become an analytic thinker by encouraging him or her to pay attention to detail and by discussing cause and effect (*What happened when ...? Why do you think ...?*).

A variety of subjects, including mathematics and social studies, may be taught in English or French as part of the French Immersion or Extended French program, but the concepts are separate from the language being used to communicate them. Children can think about mathematics and deepen their understanding of it by thinking and working in any language.

When children become used to thinking imaginatively and analytically, they will bring these habits to discussions in French or English at school.

3 Help your child become a thoughtful consumer of information.

Every day, in every language, people need to access, use, evaluate and create information. Because there is so much information available, children need to be able to filter out what they don't need and decide what information they do need. They will also need to learn how to check that the information is accurate and can be trusted.

Whatever language your child is working in, you can help by encouraging him or her to consider multiple sources and by asking such questions as, “*Who is providing this information and why? Do you agree with it?*” Learning by asking questions is one of the first skills students acquire in Ontario's publicly-funded classrooms, including those that offer French Immersion and Extended French. So asking these questions will reinforce how your child is learning at school.

By encouraging your child to read and research in both English and French, you can help your child build the vocabulary and language structures that can lead to effective communication skills in both languages. If your child's assignment is to write or discuss a topic in French, encourage him or her to do the research in French, rather than collecting information in English and translating. This way, your child benefits from learning new vocabulary related to the topic and seeing French-language structures in a context that relates to the assignment.

4 Help your child learn how to learn.

You can help your child understand how to learn effectively at home and at school, in English and in French. Children can learn in many different ways. It is helpful for them to understand that people learn differently and under different conditions.

Children need to try many different learning strategies to find which ones work best for them. This includes using organizers, repeating, restating in other words, underlining or highlighting key points. Your child might discover that remembering new French vocabulary is easier when the words are in a rhyme or a rap or if the words are associated with an action or a picture.

Share with your child what you have used to become an efficient learner. For example, talk about such skills as planning how long it might take to do an assignment or breaking tasks down into smaller chunks. Help your child recognize the conditions that create the best environment for learning. You might talk about how you remove distractions, like noise, and organize your workspace.

Sometimes, your child will have assignments in English, French or both. Help your child develop the habit of checking before leaving school for the information and materials that are needed in the language of the assignment. Point out that a lot of the vocabulary needed to complete the work will actually be in the description and resource materials for the assignment.

When your child is writing an assignment in French, remind your child of the typical items he or she will need. This will include a dictionary, a thesaurus, word webs and other reference tools. Encourage your child to get the ideas down first and then go back to revise vocabulary, check for spelling and grammar and look at the flow of the argument.

Help your child to set and achieve goals related to learning in both languages and to keep track of his or her progress. One way to do this is to encourage your child to keep a list of a variety of materials read in French and English.

Finally, point out the connection between study habits and progress so that your child realizes that achievement is related to effort. Be sure to praise both your child's efforts and his or her achievements (*"I am really impressed with the time and thought you put into this."*). By doing this, you will help your child learn to keep trying and feel good about completing his or her school work.

5 Help your child become a lifelong language learner.

Languages have many similarities but they also have many differences. Encourage your child to pay attention to and think about similarities and differences. Pointing out, for example, that an apostrophe replaces a letter in a contraction, as in the English word *don't* and the French word *c'est*, will help your child think about similarities in the languages. Reading in both languages will help your child recognize the correct spelling of words that are similar in English and French. For example, the English words *done* and *port* are similar to the French words *donne* and *porte*.

As your child progresses, ask about the similarities and differences between English and French. For example, when you notice a French word that is similar to an English word, such as *possible*, *capable* or *fatigué*, ask your child if it means the same in both languages. When you notice patterns in French, point them out to your child. For example, you might notice that adverbs in French often have the suffix *-ment*. Discuss how this pattern, in French, is like adding the suffix *-ly* to adverbs in English (e.g., *rapidement* and quickly, *lentement* and slowly, *poliment* and politely).

Draw your child's attention to interesting words and those that are the same or similar in both languages (*oblique*, *milieu*, *in lieu of*). Note words that are very similar in one language, such as *complement* and *compliment*, and *affect* and *effet*. Point out that it is important in any language to pay attention to subtle differences. These exercises will extend your child's English and French vocabulary.

Finally, you may want to caution your child that electronic translation tools may not be entirely accurate because of the complexities of language. In fact, word-for-word translation is rarely effective.

What's the most important thing I can do?

Talk, talk, talk!

So much of learning builds on what a child already knows and can do, and learning in French Immersion or Extended French is no exception. Your child will benefit from the rich language learned at home and the literacy and language lessons taught in French at school.

Having strong oral language skills provides the foundation for your child to develop better literacy skills. As we have said throughout this guide, reading and writing skills are built on listening and speaking skills. Here are some ideas to help build these skills.

- Read aloud to your child in the language you speak at home – or any other language – and talk about what you are reading.
- Provide encouragement and set aside time for reading in French and in English to help your child develop a broad vocabulary in both languages.
- If you don't know any French, have your child read to you in French and tell you what it means.
- Talk with your child about his or her interests, and help find books or websites about them in English and French – and discuss them!
- Encourage your child to express opinions about the world and explain the reasons behind them.

When children have strong and articulate oral language skills, they are better able to think and communicate clearly. As well, having a rich vocabulary significantly improves reading comprehension.

- Use precise, interesting and varied words when you talk to your child, no matter how young – for example, a “good” meal could be *delicious* or *scrumptious*, and the “big spoon” can be a *ladle*. Your discussions at home, around the table, over a book or after watching a movie will help your child understand that words like *kind*, *generous*, *thoughtful* and *considerate* are ways to describe a person's character much more precisely than “good.”

- Who do you think created this advertisement? How convincing is it? Do you think there are advertisements for this product in French? How would they be the same or different?

When your child is reading in French, a discussion starter could be, “*Tell me about what you are reading in French*” (rather than “*Can you translate this sentence for me?*”). Encourage your child to think about the setting and characters through questions like these:

- Do you think that this story takes place in a French community or in another country?
- What clues does the author provide?
- How might the story or characters be different if it were set in a different community?

Talk to your child about the right kind of language to use in different situations. For example, casual language is more acceptable in social media or a phone call, but may not be appropriate when talking to a teacher or a future employer in a job interview. This discussion will heighten your child’s understanding of the importance of using appropriate ways to express themselves in English and French, and for different purposes and audiences.

Explore technologies together to discover and use different text features (subtitles, words in bold, hyperlinks) to hear pronunciations or to check the meaning of words in English, French or other languages. If your child does not have access to technology at home, consider using it in places like the public library.

Lifelong learning in French and English

By enriching your child's language development, you can have a huge impact on his or her future success. We hope that the ideas in this guide lead to many interesting and enjoyable discussions with your child.

When learning is valued and fun, children want to continue to learn, in English and in French. Congratulations on supporting your child in French Immersion or Extended French. This puts your child on the exciting journey to becoming an accomplished learner in these two languages – and perhaps others!

Help your child learn with online resources

French as a Second Language Homework Toolbox

- This comprehensive site includes videos, audio files and printable tip sheets to support parents of students in French Immersion or Extended French.

<http://www.fslhomeworktoolbox.ca/index.php>

Canadian Parents for French (Ontario)

- Canadian Parents for French Ontario has produced a series of tip sheets for parents on how to support their children in French Immersion, Extended or Core French programs. In addition, an online step-by-step guide on organizing a parent workshop has been developed to help school councils provide a way for parents to connect with the school and with community partners to support their children's French program.

<http://on.cpf.ca>

Canadian Parents for French

- Canadian Parents for French is a national network of volunteers dedicated to the promotion and creation of French as a second language learning opportunities for young Canadians.

<http://cpf.ca>

Idélo (Groupe Media TFO)

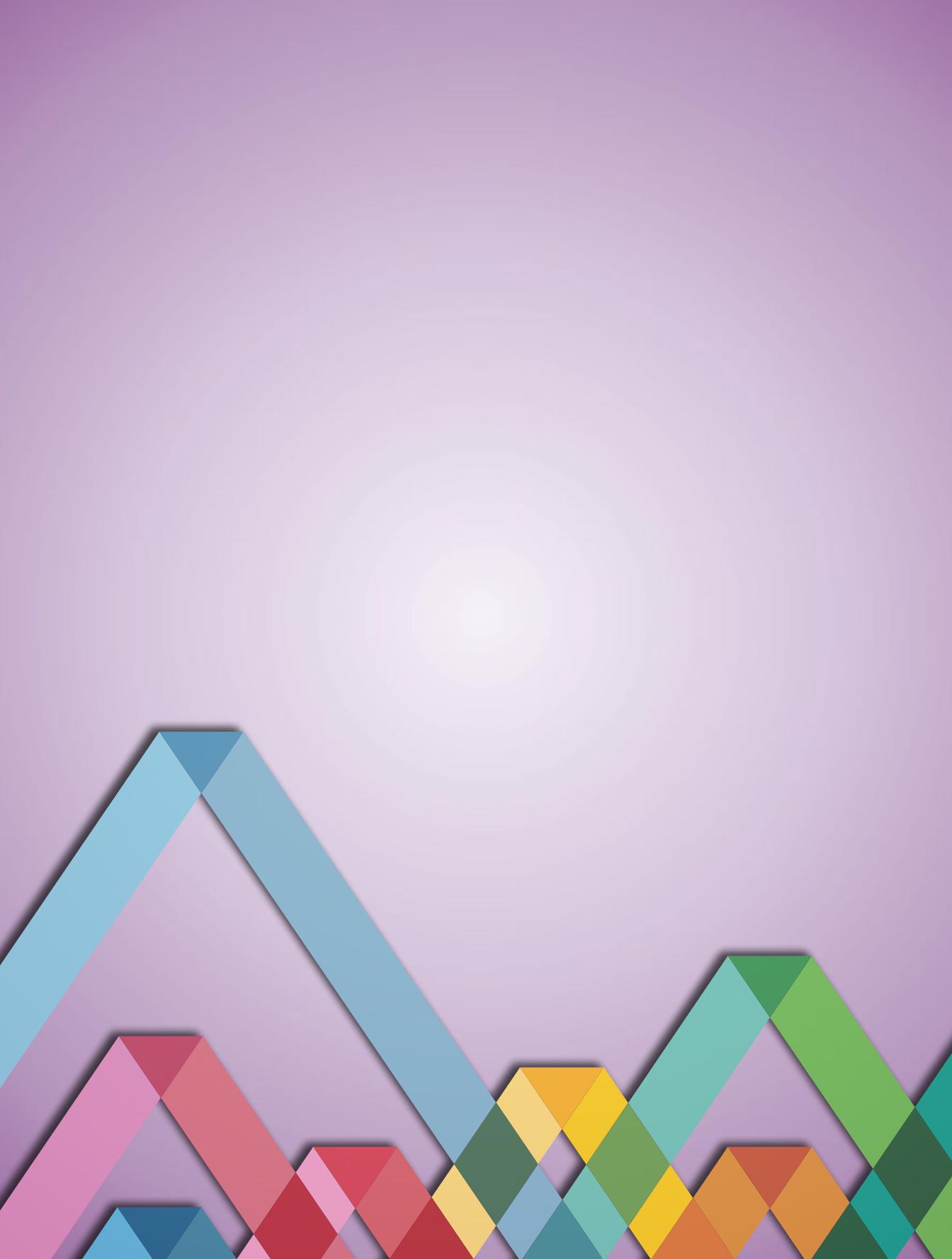
- A variety of certified resources in French (video, games, websites, apps, teaching tools), relevant and categorized according to subject matter and school grade.

www.idello.org

EduLulu

- EduLulu is a public service that evaluates educational applications for tablets. Earmarked for parents and educators, EduLulu is a public service offering independent evaluation of iOS (App Store) and Android (Google Play) educational content available in the Canadian market.

www.edululu.org



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