The French Immersion Program

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Simcoe County District School Board
THE GOAL OF FRENCH IMMERSION

The goal of the FI program is to enable students to communicate in French with a high level of proficiency, enabling them to function with ease in both English and French. Upon graduation from the program, students will communicate in French with confidence in a wide variety of real-life situations.

All students can be successful in FI. Our teachers follow Ministry of Education guidelines and provide programming founded in the principles of Universal Design for Learning and Balanced Literacy to meet the needs of all learners.

French as a Second Language (FSL) programs are enriched by including a diverse group of learners. All students benefit from second language education and focus on literacy strategies.


IS FI RIGHT FOR MY CHILD? WE SAY OUI!

FI begins in Grade 1 and gives students a bilingual education and the opportunity to become fluent in a second language.

FI information nights are held annually in January and are a chance to learn more about the program and ask questions. You can also visit www.scdsb.on.ca in the ‘Programs’ section for more information.

Program availability, space and transportation

We offer FI at various schools throughout the county. While every effort is made to accommodate all applications, available space and staffing will determine how many students can be registered in the program.

Applications will be processed in the order they are received electronically. When your child is in the second year of their Kindergarten program you will receive information about the FI program and application process from your school. Transportation is provided for students in FI through centralized pick-up locations throughout the county. Parents are responsible for getting their child to the pick-up location. It is possible that your child’s bus ride may exceed 60 minutes one way.

Locations can change

It’s important for you to understand that FI is an optional, county-wide program. As a result, program locations may change as the program evolves and grows. It’s possible your child may need to move schools during their time in the program. This may also include splitting the program between two sites. If this happens, transition planning will take place. The quality of your child’s educational experience will not be affected.

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WHAT TO EXPECT IN FRENCH IMMERSION

Students are learning to communicate—to speak, listen, view, read, write and represent—and will develop confidence in their communication skills. They will use language to interact and connect with their classmates and teacher(s) both orally and in writing. Students will develop an understanding of new vocabulary, sound/symbol relationships, letter formation and the communicative possibilities of images and sounds.

Although all strands of language will be addressed, there is a focus on oral language development in Grade 1. To overcome the initial language barrier, FI teachers use mime, drama, music and body language to help children understand what they are saying without needing to speak English.

We know that children need to feel happy and secure in the second language learning environment. Students learn the language through rhymes, songs, simple texts and ongoing interaction with their teacher and friends. Students quickly begin to understand what the teacher is saying and become increasingly comfortable communicating with others. Eventually, through supported and independent experiences, students learn to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas in French.

While the language of instruction is French, the curriculum is identical to the curriculum for those students in an English program. In Grades 1 and 2, all instruction is delivered in French. In Grades 3 and 4, students will receive one 50-minute block of English language arts per day. In Grades 5 to 8, the amount of English instruction is gradually increased to include subjects such as math and science. By Grades 7 and 8, students will receive approximately 50 per cent of their instruction in English and 50 per cent of their instruction in French.

In FI, parents find that children begin speaking French with confidence and ease very quickly. You will enjoy watching your child progress through the program and be amazed at how fluent they become in French. We understand that many parents may not have a French background and may be anxious about a second language journey for their child(ren). Our FI program is designed with this in mind.

THE BENEFITS OF LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE

FI is one of the most effective methods for teaching a second language. Immersion works so well because younger children develop second language skills naturally and demonstrate an enthusiasm that allows them to take risks. Research shows that second-language learning provides significant cognitive and academic benefits. It is known to enhance first-language and overall literacy skills and to provide a foundation for the learning of additional languages. The Ontario Curriculum for French supports this:

POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS STUDYING FSL INCLUDE:
- increased mental flexibility
- improved problem-solving skills
- a better understanding of aspects of a variety of cultures
- a greater awareness of global issues, including those related to the environment and sustainability
- expanded career opportunities

“The ability to speak both of Canada’s official languages helps prepare students for their role as active and engaged citizens in today’s bilingual and multicultural Canada. Moreover, the language learning strategies that students develop in the FSL program can contribute to an interest in learning languages throughout their lives and provide them with the skills to do so. Such abilities benefit the individual; but Canadian society—as well as the global community—also stands to gain from having plurilingual citizens.”

The Ontario Curriculum: French As a Second Language, 2013

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WHAT DOES FI LOOK LIKE IN HIGH SCHOOL?

At the high school level, students take four consecutive French language courses and six additional courses taught in French. Students who graduate from the program receive a Certificate of Bilingual Studies in French Immersion.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD IN FRENCH

It’s not necessary for you to speak French in order to support your child’s French language development. One of the most important factors contributing to your child’s success in FI is a positive attitude at home about the second language and the program. It’s important to give children time to adjust to learning in a new language so that they have the opportunity to gain confidence. If your child is eager to speak French at home, offer encouragement.

Please remember that some children may be reluctant to initially express themselves in French outside of the classroom. Throughout the program, you’ll be provided with tips and tools to support your child’s learning.

SUGGESTIONS INCLUDE:

- Read to your child regularly in your home language.
- Ask your child to teach you what they are learning during the day. Make a game out of it by creating flash cards or an English/French vocabulary matching game.
- Borrow dual-language books from the library. Continue to read to your child in English. Look at the French words together. Encourage your child to sound out words in French, and/or match French words to pictures.
- Look for French around the home. Most Canadian packaging uses both French and English.
- Provide ongoing encouragement and celebrate your child’s achievements.
- Expose your child to French media, including television and radio programs, online resources and films.
- Plan family trips and outings to locations where French is spoken frequently. Encourage your child to help the family communicate. Finding opportunities to speak and hear French outside of the school environment will also help your child to understand that French is not just for the classroom.
- When providing homework help, focus on concepts, rather than the language. Your child can then focus on the language while at school.

ONLINE RESOURCES AND APPS

There are many websites and apps designed to help develop French language skills.

WEBSITES TO CHECK OUT:

www.radio-canada.ca/jeunesse
CBC’s French children’s website has games and videos in French. The tab “zone des petits” has videos and games for a younger audience.

http://toutpetits.telequebec.tv
This French site has games, activities and videos for children.

www.tfo.org
The French Language Television Network’s website has educational games and content designed for French children and children in French Immersion programs.

www.fslihomeworktoolbox.ca
This site offers homework help for parents of students in French Immersion.

www.mangolanguages.com
This is a free online language learning program provided by Simcoe County’s public libraries.

www.immersionhelp.ca
This subscription-based website provides parents with ideas for French learning at home.

SOME GREAT APPS INCLUDE:

KidSchool:
My first alphabet in French
My French Clipounets:
Animated French nursery rhymes
French Vocabulary (Flashcards)
La maison que Jacques a bâtie
First French words with phonetics
Duolingo:
Free spaced repetition software (SRS) driven learning app (like Rosetta Stone)

CONTACT US

If you have any questions or comments about your child’s progress, contact your child’s teacher and/or the principal. For general questions about the program, please contact our French as a Second Language Resource Teacher at 705-734-6363.

For an accessible version of this information, contact info@scdsb.on.ca.