



French as a Second Language Programs

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's French as a Second Language (FSL) programs differ in intensity but share a common purpose: to maximize opportunities for students to reach their full potential in French as a Second language (FSL). All programs are child-centred and focus on the concurrent development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Knowledge and skills are taught in an authentic, meaningful context that emphasizes proficiency across subject areas. The programs promote an appreciation of French culture in Canada and in other regions of the world.

According to the 2004-2005 report of the Commissioner of Official Languages, research shows that people "who master more than one language increase their self-confidence and self-esteem and are more at ease with others."

— (Adam, 2005, p.107)

"In an era of increasing globalization, it is critical to heighten students' awareness that English-French bilingualism is an economic and cultural asset both within Canada and beyond."

— A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, K-12, p. 3

Elementary Level

All elementary schools offer a two-year bilingual kindergarten program where students receive 50% of their instruction in English and 50% in French within an inquiry- and play-based learning environment. Students learn in an environment rich with opportunities for language acquisition. They learn French language through songs, rhymes, movement, stories and through the exploration of all areas of the curriculum, all of which lays the foundation for learning offered at the OCDSB: Core French (entry point in grade 1), Early French Immersion (EFI- entry point in grade 1), and Middle French Immersion (MFI- entry point in grade 4).

The aim of the Core French Program is to develop basic communication skills in French and gain an appreciation of French culture in Canada and in other parts of the world. The program allows more time to concentrate on English language skills while developing a basic level of proficiency in the French language.

The program is mandatory for all elementary students not enrolled in French Immersion from grades 1 to 8.

French Immersion, an optional program, is a type of bilingual education in which students receive instruction in French for a significant portion of the school day. It is designed specifically for students whose first language is not French. It enables them to become functionally bilingual through exposure to French. In all French Immersion programs, students study the same curriculum content as their peers in the English program.

Secondary Level

OCDSB secondary schools offer three program pathways in FSL – core, extended, and immersion - program that include both core French and French immersion language courses, as well as a range of other subjects taught in French. In OCDSB secondary schools, a student who earns ten credits in French (i.e., four in FSL courses and six in other subjects in which French is the language of instruction) shall be awarded a French immersion certificate. A student who earns seven credits in French (i.e., four in FSL courses and three in other subjects taught in French) shall be awarded an extended French certificate, while a student who earns four credits in FSL shall be awarded a Core French certificate.

The aim of the Core French Program is to provide students with fundamental communication skills in French and an understanding of the nature of the language and its culture. Core French offers students the chance to develop a usable command of the French language that can be expanded through further study or through contact with French-speaking people. At the secondary level, Core French is a single-credit course (110 hours) and is offered at all levels from grade 9 to 12. In keeping with Ministry requirements, French is compulsory in grade 9. Core French is offered at both the academic and open levels.

The aim of the French Immersion program is to develop and refine students' ability to communicate in French as well as to expand their knowledge of the language through the study of francophone literature. By the end of the four-year program, students will participate easily in conversations and discussions. They will also 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.

In high school, the Secondary Gifted French Immersion Program is an application (referral) based program available to French Immersion students who meet criteria for an exceptionality of Giftedness. The admission criteria and application process can be supported through a student's community school. Applications to the program are reviewed by the Gifted Program review committee. The Identification, Placement and Review Committee process will take place for students offered placement in the program.

Students enrolled in a grade 12 FSL course can also participate in the Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELFP), an internationally recognized test of French proficiency for candidates whose first language is not French. The assessment is based on the Common European Framework of Reference which defines language proficiency along six global levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2. Four competencies are measured across all DELF levels: listening (compréhension de l'oral), speaking (production orale), reading (compréhension des écrits), and writing (production écrite). The French Ministry of National Education awards a diploma to successful candidates. In the 2022-2023 school year, 90% of grade 12 FSL students participated, 95% of whom were successful.

FSL Program	Core French	Early French Immersion (EFI)	Middle French Immersion (MFI)
Description of program	The two-year bilingual kindergarten program (50% English and 50% French instruction) provides the foundation for learning in the Core French program. In the Core French program, students develop basic oral comprehension and communication skills. The program is mandatory for all elementary students not enrolled in French Immersion.	The two-year bilingual kindergarten program (50% English and 50% French instruction) provides the foundation for learning in the Early French Immersion program. In the Early French Immersion (EFI) program, students are provided with the opportunity to become functionally bilingual through an early entry in grade 1 with exposure to French. Grade 1 students receive 80% of their program in French. Mathematics is taught in English. In grades 2 to 6 students receive 60% of their program in French. In grades 7 and 8 students receive 50% of their program in French. <i>Note: The OCDSB Elementary Time Allocation Model outlines the language of instruction and number of minutes of instruction per week in each subject area.</i>	In the Middle French Immersion (MFI) program, students are provided with the opportunity to obtain a solid foundation in English language skills in the primary grades before starting intensive study of a second language. Students have developed French language competency through the two-year bilingual kindergarten program and the Core French program in grades 1 to 3. The MFI program begins in grade 4 after a student has had several years of mainly English language instruction that includes 200 minutes per week of Core French. In grades 4 to 6, students receive 66% of their instruction in French. Generally all subjects, with the exception of English Language Arts and Mathematics, are taught in French. In grades 7 and 8 students receive 50% of their program in French. <i>Note: The OCDSB Elementary Time Allocation Model outlines the language of instruction and number of minutes of instruction per week in each subject area.</i>
Eligibility for program	All students entering the two year bilingual kindergarten program are provided with 50% of French instruction every week. In grade 1, students not enrolled in French Immersion have access to the mandated Core French program through to grade 9 which provides 40 minutes of French instruction every day. Core French is available as an optional course for students in grades 10 to 12.	All students entering grade 1 are eligible for enrolment in the EFI program.	Students entering grade 4 are eligible for enrolment in the MFI program.
Expected outcomes for students in the program	A student who successfully completes the Core French program is expected to have achieved a basic level of proficiency in the French language. <i>Note: The Core French Program is mandatory for all elementary students not enrolled in French Immersion.</i>	A student who successfully completes the EFI program is expected to be able to communicate with ease and feel comfortable in either language community and also accept employment, training, or further education in either language. The EFI Program produces the highest level of French proficiency, particularly in oral competency. <i>Note: This level of achievement is attainable by a student who is enrolled in one of the Immersion programs at the elementary level and who later enrolls in a secondary level program which meets the requirements to obtain the OCDSB Extended French or French Immersion Certificate.</i>	A student who successfully completes the MFI program is expected to be able to communicate with ease and feel comfortable in either language community and also accept employment, training, or further education in either language. <i>Note: This level of achievement is attainable by a student who is enrolled in one of the immersion programs at the elementary level and who later enrolls in a secondary level program which meets the requirements to obtain the Extended French or French Immersion Certificate.</i>
Frequently Asked Questions			
What are the reasons given by parents for choosing this program?	Parents' choice of the Core French program is frequently based on a desire to give their children a chance to develop the oral communication skills they need to understand and interact with others, to express themselves, and to communicate their own ideas. <i>Note: At the primary level, Core French curriculum expectations have been developed in order to prepare students for the provincial expectations in French as a Second Language: Core French, Grades 4-8, Ministry of Education curriculum.</i> <i>The Ontario Ministry of Education requires students in English-language schools to study French from grades 4 to 9 and to accumulate a minimum of 710 hours of French instruction by the end of grade 9.</i>	Parents' choice of EFI is frequently based on a desire to give their children an opportunity to become functionally bilingual through an early entry with maximum exposure to French. Young children usually have less reticence in imitating a French role model, thus take more risks in expressing themselves in French, and get more practice. Many parents look to the EFI program as a perceived means of improving job opportunities for their children at a later date.	Although there is often an element of self-selection by the student, parental choice of MFI is frequently based on a desire to give their children a chance to obtain a solid grounding in English language skills in the primary grades before starting intensive study of a second language. Many parents look to the MFI Program as a perceived means of improving job opportunities for their children at a later date.

FSL Program	Core French	Early French Immersion (EFI)	Middle French Immersion (MFI)
What effect does the Immersion Program have on children's basic English language skills?	Not applicable	Many years of testing and research show that French Immersion has no negative effect on the development of English language skills as measured by standardized tests. There is an initial lag in English in EFI because of the delay in the introduction of English language arts, but this disappears within the first year that English language arts is introduced. Some studies have even shown the enhancement of some English language and study skills of EFI students.	Many years of testing and research show that French Immersion has no negative effect on the development of English language skills as measured by standardized tests. Some studies have even shown the enhancement of some English language skills of MFI students.
What effect does the Immersion Program have on children's academic achievement in other subject areas?	Not applicable	Generally EFI students have not demonstrated any lags relative to the performance of English/Core French program students. On various system-wide tests, the overall tendency has been for immersion students to perform as well as, or better than, comparable students in the English/Core French program.	Generally, MFI students have not demonstrated any lags relative to the performance of English/Core French program students. On various system-wide tests, the overall tendency has been for students in immersion to perform as well as, or better than, comparable students in the English/Core French program.
How does this Immersion Program rate in terms of French language proficiency outcomes?	Not applicable	On average, the overall measure of French proficiency is similar for students who were enrolled in either an EFI or MFI program in grade 8 who continue to study French through the end of grade 12.	On average, the overall measure of French proficiency is similar for students who were enrolled in either an EFI or MFI program in grade 8 who continue to study French through the end of grade 12.
Does participation in a Core French or Immersion Program affect general intellectual or cognitive growth?	A number of studies suggest that bilingualism, or the process of becoming bilingual, can positively influence aspects of cognitive and linguistic growth.	A number of studies suggest that bilingualism, or the process of becoming bilingual, can positively influence aspects of cognitive and linguistic growth.	A number of studies suggest that bilingualism, or the process of becoming bilingual, can positively influence aspects of cognitive and linguistic growth.
Is the curriculum in the Immersion Program the same as in the English/ Core French Program?	Not applicable	The learning expectations and curriculum content for EFI are the same as the learning expectations and curriculum content of the English/Core French program.	The learning expectations and curriculum content for MFI are the same as the learning expectations and curriculum content of the English/Core French program.
What options are available for the students in secondary school?	Students are required to complete one compulsory credit in French offered at the grade 9 level. Interested students may continue to study Core French from grades 10 to 12.	When EFI students reach high school they may enter a French Immersion program, an Extended French program, or an English/ Core French program.	When MFI students reach high school they may enter the French Immersion program, the Extended French program, or an English/Core French program. <i>Note: The principal has the right to permit students to enrol in a course for which they may not have the entrance requirements if they have achieved the necessary proficiency in French.</i>
What factors should I consider in determining which program is right for my child?	Studies show that students perform better in school if their parents/guardians are involved in their education. Parents/guardians should consider their child's curiosity and enthusiasm towards learning a second language. Parents/guardians can encourage their children to learn French by reinforcing the value of French and other cultures. Parents/guardians can offer their children the opportunity to hear and speak French in authentic situations (e.g. watch French television programs, read French books, listen to French music, eat at a French restaurant, etc.)	As parents/guardians have had the opportunity to evaluate their child's overall achievement and adjustment to school in the two- year bilingual kindergarten program, they should consider their child's curiosity and openness towards learning a second language as well as their child's ability to handle a temporary setback in communication skills. Parents/guardians should also consider their readiness to be supportive if their child experiences some difficulties in the beginning. Parents/guardians can also offer their children the opportunity to hear and speak French in authentic situations (e.g. watch French television programs, read French books, listen to French music, eat at a French restaurant, etc.) Parents/ guardians are not expected to speak or understand French.	As parents/guardians have had the opportunity to evaluate their child's overall achievement and adjustment to school in the primary grades, they should consider their child's interest and feelings about entering the program, the learning skills which they have already acquired and can apply to the learning of a second language, as well as their child's ability to handle a temporary setback in communication skills. Parents/guardians should also consider their readiness to be supportive if their child experiences some difficulties in the beginning. Parents/guardians can also offer their children the opportunity to hear and speak French in authentic situations (e.g. watch French television programs, read French books, listen to French music, eat at a French restaurant, etc.). Parents/ guardians are not expected to speak or understand French.

FSL Program	Core French	Early French Immersion (EFI)	Middle French Immersion (MFI)
<p>How do I register my child in this program?</p>	<p>Kindergarten registration occurs in January/February each year. Parents/guardians wishing to register their child in the English/Core French program in grade 1 should contact the school in their local area to complete the registration process.</p> <p>To determine the school which serves your area, please use the School Locator tool on our website at www.ocdsb.ca or call the Planning Office at 613-596-8780.</p> <p>Transportation is provided in accordance with the Transportation Policy for elementary schools.</p>	<p>Kindergarten registration occurs in January/February each year. Parents/guardians wishing to register their child in the EFI program in grade 1 should contact the EFI school for their area to complete the registration process.</p> <p>To determine the EFI school which serves your area, please use the School Locator tool on our website at www.ocdsb.ca or call the Planning Office at 613-596-8780.</p> <p>Transportation for these classes is provided in accordance with the Transportation Policy for elementary schools.</p>	<p>Parents/guardians wishing to register their child in the MFI program in grade 4 should contact the MFI school for their area to complete the registration process.</p> <p>To determine the MFI school which serves your area, please use the School Locator tool on our website at www.ocdsb.ca or call the Planning Office at 613-596-8780. MFI registration occurs in early spring each year.</p> <p>Transportation for these classes is provided in accordance with the Transportation Policy for elementary schools.</p>

Other Frequently Asked Questions

Are FSL programs beneficial for my child?

Yes. Regardless of the FSL program chosen, exposure to the French language provides children with many academic and social benefits, including a deeper understanding of French and French-speaking cultures, a greater number of career options, a lifelong ability to communicate in French, and a facility for learning other languages.

If I choose a French Immersion Program for my child, will it be a detriment to my child if I don't speak French myself?

No, not at all. French Immersion programs were specifically designed for children whose parents/guardians have little or no facility in French. Nevertheless, parents/guardians can still encourage their children to learn French by reinforcing the value of French and other cultures. Parents/guardians can offer their children the opportunity to hear and speak French in authentic situations (e.g., take a trip to Quebec, watch French television programs, read French books, listen to French music, eat at a French restaurant, etc.).

Will my child receive English language instruction in a French Immersion Program?

Yes. With the exception of grade 1 in the EFI program, where only Mathematics is taught in English, students in both EFI and MFI will receive English language instruction for English. All students in the OCDSB receive mathematics instruction in English from grade 1 and up.

In Canada, where French and English have equal status as official languages, there are significant advantages to being able to communicate in both. Furthermore, the benefits of learning an additional language are now widely acknowledged to extend beyond the obvious rewards associated with bilingualism.

Is it true that French Immersion is only for 'gifted' children?

No. Any student enrolled in the school district is eligible for a French Immersion Program. Children with a variety of learning needs and abilities are enrolled in French Immersion programs.

Can a student who is currently an English language learner enrol in a French Immersion program?

Yes. Research indicates that learning an additional language at an early age is possible and has a positive impact on intellectual growth. Cognitive development is enriched and enhanced, as immersion students develop learning skills that they may apply to their first language, other academic subject areas, and life experiences.

Will a French Immersion Program mask, or even worsen, any learning difficulties my child might have?

No. Academic ability is not related to performance in French language skills. A child's learning difficulties in reading, writing, or other subject areas will surface regardless of the language of instruction. These difficulties should not normally be a barrier to bilingual education. French Immersion teachers are very aware of children who may be experiencing learning problems and will work with your child to provide the learning support services required.

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133 Greenbank Road • Ottawa, ON K2H 6L3 • Phone: 613-721-1820
Fax: 613-820-6968 • Website: www.ocdsb.ca