FAQ’S

**Is French Immersion for my child?**

From the onset of school entry, parents make decisions which will affect their child’s future. When choosing a French Second Language program, parents must decide just how important the learning of French is to the future of their child and how competent in the French language they want their child to become. The language of instruction bears little, if any, relation to academic performance, particularly in an early immersion program. Research has consistently demonstrated that the student who excels in a regular English program will probably excel in an immersion program; the student who would have difficulties in an English program will likely experience those same difficulties in immersion.

**There is no help available in French at home. Won’t this pose a problem?**

Teachers are aware that most children come from unilingual homes, so reports to the home are in English. In the case of homework, the school expects the child to attempt to complete it. But, if problems occur, it is preferable for your child to seek further help at school.

**Will my child’s English skills suffer because of immersion?**

This question has been studied extensively during the past 25 years, both in Canada and abroad. The conclusion is that, far from hindering English development, knowledge of another language is actually beneficial in improving capabilities in the first language, and increases the ability to learn a third and fourth language. There may be certain lags in English Language Arts when a child enrolls in an early French immersion program. However, after the introduction of English Language Arts instruction, children quickly catch up to their peers. Studies have shown consistently over the years that, by the end of grade 6, children in immersion programs perform as well as or better than their peers in the regular program. It must not be forgotten that the child is (usually) of English-speaking background, most often living in an English-speaking area. Cultural identity and first language ability is not adversely affected by an immersion program.

**If our children are having academic or other problems in French immersion, should we transfer them to the English stream?**

Research and experience have shown that children with problems can benefit from a French immersion program. They learn their basic skills at their individual rate, and still acquire competence in French. There are very few instances where transferring a child out of immersion benefits the child.

**Should I read to my child in English at home?**

It is very important for parents to read to children on a regular basis. Demonstrating a love of reading and modelling positive reading behaviours will encourage your child to develop a love of reading.

**If my child is in the Early French Immersion Program, will he/she learn the same things as students in English classes?**

Yes, the curriculum must follow the guidelines of the Department of Education and parallel the curriculum in the English non-immersion classes. Materials in French cover the same basic program as in English; students work toward the same academic goals regardless of the language of instruction.

**How much French is needed?**

In New Brunswick, an English-speaking student must take French until the end of grade 10 to meet graduation requirements. The objective is to continue to expand and strengthen the student’s language proficiency until the end of high school; thus additional courses are required. Students must include some French studies each year in grades 11 and 12.

**What should I think if my child is having difficulty in the program?**

First of all, talk to your child’s teacher. By discussing issues with the classroom teacher, you can often resolve problems. If there is no resolution to the problem, you may ask the teacher to contact the Resource and Methods teacher of your child’s school. The Resource and Methods teacher may be able to offer suggestions for adjustments in the classroom in order to better meet your child’s needs and ideas to help you further assist your child.

**What can I do to help my child with homework?**

Many parents either have a limited background in French or do not speak the language. If this is the case, please don’t feel alarmed. By far the most important factor in your child’s progress is the encouragement and positive support you are able to give your child. You should make homework a top priority at home.

**How can I help my child in French, Mathematics, English, sciences and social studies?**

Your child’s teacher will have many strategies and suggestions to help you assist your child in the various subject areas.

**Out of Class Opportunities**

School plays an important part in students’ lives. However, it is only part of life; there are limitations to the language experiences school can provide. That’s why there is a need to encourage students to use their second language in real-life situations.

To help do this, a number of activities are available for students in all school districts. For details on the programs mentioned below and others, please consult with your local school district office. Please note that, while all programs mentioned are offered in each district, not all students may be able to participate.

**The Junior (Grades 9 and 10) Immersion Summer Program**

The four-week course is held for a number of grade 9 and 10 students who wish to improve their knowledge of French. It is offered at the Université de Moncton and sponsored by the Department of Education. The Department of Education pays the cost of tuition and room and board.

Apart from classes, students take part in a range of activities, including sports, stage production and newspaper editing. All these reinforce their acquisition of French. Discipline is strictly enforced, and residence life is closely monitored.

**My Friend - mon ami(e)**

This letter writing project is sponsored by Dialogue New Brunswick. Each year, more than 4,000 grades 4 to 9 students from the two linguistic communities exchange letters and e-mails with each other. Correspondence is exchanged at least twice and a cassette-exchange happens at the end of the school year. The English-speaking students write or record their messages in English, and receive replies in French, and vice-versa for the French-speaking students. A limited number of classes can take part in a one-day visit allowing them to meet their twins for a day of linguistic and cultural exchange.

**The Summer Language Bursary Program (Grade 11 - Post-Secondary)**

Sponsored by the Federal Government, but administered by the provinces, this program offers a French Immersion course (or English for French-speaking students) for students who will be completing grade 11 or who are enrolled in a post-secondary institution at the time of application. Courses are offered at the accredited institutions across Canada. All high schools receive the information and application forms when these become available, usually in January of each year. The bursary covers the cost of tuition and room and board. For additional information, consult www.cmec.ca/olp/

**The New Brunswick–Québec Student Exchange**

Each year, a selected number of grade 10 or 11 students participate in this exchange. Students are "twinned" with students from Québec who share their interests. From September to December, the Québec students live with their New Brunswick families, and from January to April, the New Brunswickers join their "families" in Québec. Participants for this program go through an intensive screening process which involves the school district, the school principal, the district French Second Language supervisor or co-ordinator and, most importantly, the parents.

**The CPF Oratorical Contest**

Each year, Canadian Parents for French sponsors a provincial oratorical contest where students practise public speaking. This contest welcomes students of Core French as well as French Immersion. Each district participates and sends its winners in the various categories to the provincial contest. This is an extremely valuable experience for students, as it gives them the opportunity to use their second language in a formal setting.

**Other**

A number of districts offer other opportunities such as French clubs, French language variety shows and plays, and "semaines françaises". Taking part in such activities helps students get the most out of their second language program.