

# Early French Immersion Program

## Information Session 2026



**Halifax**

Regional Centre for Education



# Goals

- ➔ To provide information about the Early French Immersion Program
- ➔ To discuss the benefits of learning French as a Second Language
- ➔ To answer possible questions



# French Immersion is Inclusive

The French Immersion program is open to *all students* regardless of their first language.



# What is Early French Immersion?

Early French Immersion is a program designed for students whose first language is not French.

Instructional strategies and materials are designed with this in mind.

Early French Immersion begins in primary and continues to grade 12.



# Early French Immersion Schools

HRCE has 28 elementary schools offering Early French Immersion.

Primary French Immersion is offered in 20 of these schools.



# French Immersion in Nova Scotia

The Early French Immersion Program  
(Grade P-12) began in 1977.

The Late Immersion Program (Grade 7-12) began  
in 1985.





# Percentage of Instruction in French

Primary - Grade 2

**90%-100%**

(varies due to Music and Physical Education)

Grades 3-6

**80%- 85%**

(formal English instruction is introduced)

Grades 7-9

approximately **70%**

Grades 10-12

minimum of **50%**  
( 9 of 18 credits)



# French Immersion P-12

A French Immersion Certificate is awarded at High School graduation upon completion of program requirements.

High school students must complete 50% of their courses in French to receive this certificate.





# French Immersion P-12

Graduates of the French Immersion Program:

- will be able to communicate effectively in oral and written French and English.
- will be able to achieve expected learning outcomes of courses taught in French and in English.
- could pursue university or college education in French.



# Curriculum

Early French Immersion students follow the ***same*** curriculum as their peers in the English program for subjects other than language. The French Language Arts curriculum is not a translation but designed in French for 2nd language learners.



# What to expect in Primary French Immersion

French Immersion is a rich and rewarding learning experience, and it requires commitment from students and teachers. Learning in another language takes **time**, **effort**, and, **perseverance**, especially in the early months.

**Students and teachers communicate in French throughout the school day** (unless there is a safety issue). This full-immersion approach is intentional and is one of the most effective ways to support language learning. At the beginning, students may experience some **productive struggle** as they build confidence and understanding; this is a **normal and important** part of the learning process.



# What to expect in Primary French Immersion

Teachers **do not switch to English** for instruction. Instead, **they use proven, research-based strategies** to support students: clear routines, visuals, modelling, repetition, and explicit teaching of the language students need to be successful in content areas. These supports help students access learning while continuing to develop their French skills.

Because of this, it is important that students and families choose French Immersion with an understanding of what the program involves. Students do best when they want to be in immersion and are willing to learn and use French as their language of communication, even when it feels challenging at times. With strong instruction, encouragement, and time, students are supported in developing both their language skills and confidence.



# How do students learn French?

Students will learn French in the same stages that they learned their first language.

Oral → Reading → Writing

They will be immersed in French and will build their vocabulary and grammar as the year progresses using an approach that will develop their language through literacy cycles. Through modeling and explicit instruction by the teacher, students will connect their oral language skills to reading and writing.





# Neurolinguistic Approach (NLA)

The NLA is a way to teach and acquire an additional language for the purposes of communication. It is based on current research about how languages are learned. The result is students being able to engage in **authentic** and **spontaneous** conversation.

Oral → Reading → Writing





# Authentic Learning

- As children enter school they need to continue to learn through play, movement and hands-on learning.
- Children need time to explore, to create, to manipulate, and to design their own learning. They also benefit from support, guidance, and gentle nudges to move beyond their comfort zone.
- In Immersion, interactions are supported by the classroom teacher modeling how to communicate in French while providing authentic experiences and opportunities to interact.

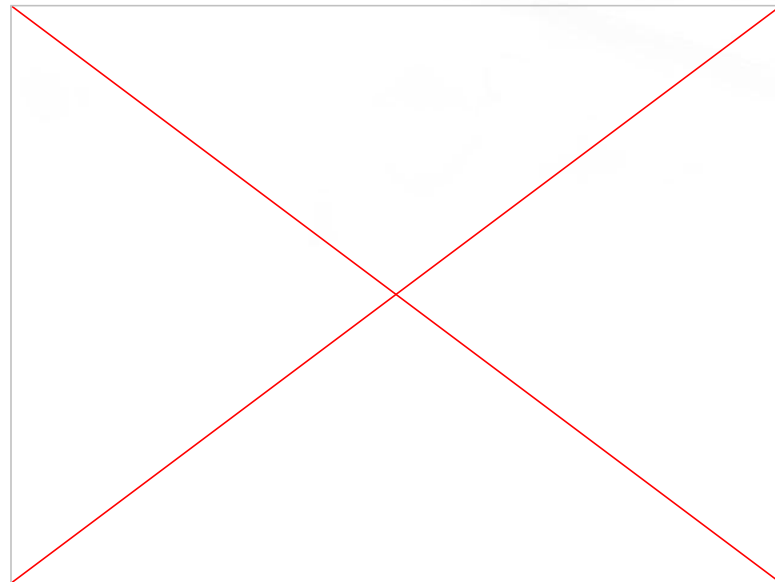


# Growth over the course of the year

## Beginning to Mid Year

- Understand and use familiar words and expressions
- Build their vocabulary
- Understand and respond to simple directives modeled in French
- Start to identify letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds

Video of Primary French Immersion Students





# Growth over the course of the year

## Mid Year to End of Year

- Starts to communicate more independently with the teacher
- Uses modeled oral language
- Listens to and recites songs and poems
- Uses understanding of letters/sound to experiment with reading
- Ask simple questions
- Participate in class discussions



# Benefits of Early French Immersion

- The student's knowledge of their first language is transferred to and interacts with the knowledge they are acquiring in the additional language.
- Language concepts and skills learned and developed in French support concepts and skills learned in their first language.
- Bilingualism can enhance some aspects of academic and cognitive growth (improved literacy, mental flexibility, creativity, divergent thinking, higher order thinking, expanded view of the world).

(Arnett & Bourgoin, 2017; Genesee, 2007)



# English Instruction

- Formal English Instruction begins in Grade 3.
- English reading abilities may not develop at the same rate as P-3 students in the English Program, however, research shows that over time, immersion students do as well, if not better, than their English counterparts. (Bournot-Trites et Tellowitz, 2002)
- If English is the home language, research shows that second-language learning does not negatively affect it. Students rapidly catch up once English is introduced and, that many students surpass their peers by Grades 5 or 6, and that skills in French can and do transfer to English.

(Genesee, 2007)





# If English is not the home language

Learning a 2nd language, such as French, can have an influence on learning additional languages.

(Arnett and Bourgoïn, 2018)





# Supports for Students in Immersion

- Le Sentier and LocoMOTive are both intervention programs focusing on phonological and phonemic awareness
- Resource
- Teaching Support Team (TST) provides support and guidance to teachers
- Student Planning Team (SPT) explores supports and makes decisions about the student's program.
- Adaptations and Individual Program Plans (IPP)



# Useful Links

Halifax Regional Centre for Education:

<https://www.hrce.ca/about-hrce/school-administration/registration/french-programs/early>

[Canadian Parents for French](#)

[Department of Education and Early Childhood Development How Bilingual Am I](#)

[The Neurolinguistic Approach \(Intensive French Canada website\)](#)



# Works Cited

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