

# FRENCH IMMERSION

## in Foothills School Division

### Why French Immersion?

French Immersion is a highly successful approach to second language learning. When French is not a language used in the home, formal instruction in school is often the most authentic option for children to learn it. Given the strong support for bilingualism in Canada, French Immersion has become an important component of efforts to recognize the individual and society-wide benefits of second language acquisition. Second language skills are a passport to the world, the key to a rich professional, personal and cultural life.

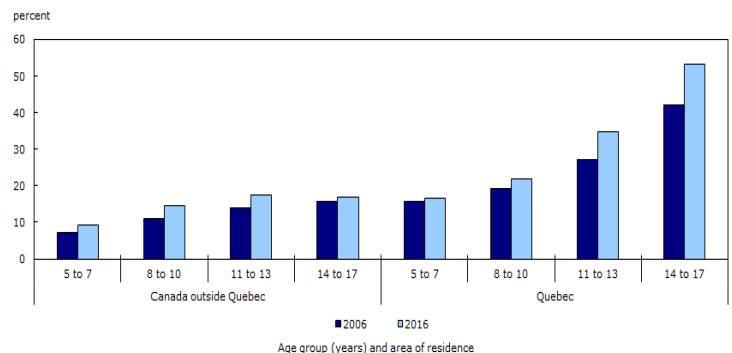
In 2019 Canadian Parents for French reported that French immersion has received accolades for its success in opening up social, academic and professional possibilities for learners. The importance of balancing a focus on language and content has never been more of a priority in enhancing proficiency, sustaining levels of motivation and combatting attrition. A counterbalanced approach to language development, using both proactive and reactive strategies, serves to develop autonomous use of French. <https://cpf.ca/en/files/State-of-FSL-Education-Report-2019-web.pdf>

### When should my child begin?

While enrolment in intensive or immersion French at just about any age of schooling relates to higher rates of bilingualism, the number of years of study has a clear impact. For this reason, Foothills School Division offers students the opportunity to enter French Immersion at the Jr Kindergarten and Kindergarten levels. The more years a student can devote to learning a language, the better the outcome. *The Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023*, which outlines the details and costs of significant government investments in the enhance-

ment of official languages in Canada from 2018 to 2023, sets out specific objectives for increasing individual English–French bilingualism over the next 20 years. Specifically, this plan aims to increase the English–French bilingualism rate from 17.9% in 2016 to 20% by 2036. [www.statcan.gc.ca](http://www.statcan.gc.ca)

Chart 1  
 English–French bilingualism rate of children and youth aged 5 to 17, by detailed age group, Canada outside Quebec and Quebec, 2006 and 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006 and 2016.

### How does our French Immersion Program work?

French Immersion programs follow the same Alberta Education curricular guidelines as the English program. Only the language of instruction differs. In Kindergarten to Grade 3, students experience 100% of their core instructional time in French, and where possible, their option courses are taught in French. Through repetition and role modeling, students are provided with positive encouragement to try out this new language; through watching and listening, students absorb and learn to respond appropriately in French. In Kindergarten through Grade 2, English Language Arts is not part of the curricula. However, beginning in Grade 3, it is introduced as a core subject and continued every year thereafter along with those taught in French: Social Studies, Math, Science and French Language Arts.

**There is no requirement for parents to be bilingual in French.** In fact, immersion programs are designed for children whose parents have little or no facility in French. That said, parental support and encouragement is essential. You can help your child by exposing him or her to French language and culture outside the school — books, videos, theatre, television or cultural events — any activity that allows for extracurricular use of the language will build skill, vocabulary and confidence.

### ***Is French Immersion delivered in an inclusive environment?***

French Immersion students will range from gifted to those with behavioral, emotional, physical or learning challenges. Our French Immersion program is offered in an inclusive environment where every child will be able to access the learning supports they require to be a successful second language learner. A child requiring reading, writing or other classroom interventions will receive these no matter the language of instruction. Each student will be supported to develop competence in French while enhancing their English language skills. Consult with your child's teacher or school administration if you wish to explore this topic further.

### ***Does French Immersion impede English Language development?***

Research has consistently shown that the English language skills of French Immersion students meet or exceed those of children in regular English language programs. There is often an initial lag in English skills development, however, this is not unexpected in a predominantly French language learning environment. These same studies have demonstrated that the gradual introduction of English language instruction closes this skills gap by the end of elementary school. In fact, given that roughly half of all English words have a French or Latin root, knowledge of French can aid in building English vocabulary and spelling.

### ***What about immigrant or English Second Language learners?***

On the surface, it may seem that learning English as a Second Language (ESL) presents challenge enough to immigrant students whose first language is not English. However, available evidence indicates that immigrant ESL students enrolled in French Immersion perform as well as their Anglophone counterparts. The

French Immersion classroom can often provide advantages not available to immigrant students in the English classroom. For example, all students in French Immersion settings are learning a second language and the use of visual aids, gestures and rephrasing are designed to support all students in that environment. ESL students who come to French Immersion having already developed literacy in their home language often perform even better than Anglophone students.

### ***What are the Entrance Guidelines for French Immersion in Foothills?***

The French Immersion Program is accessible as an entry point to any child entering Jr. Kindergarten, Kindergarten or Grade 1, or to any student in Grades 2 to 9 moving into Foothills School Division and having participated in French Immersion at their previous school location.

Our Board of Trustees committed to the French Immersion Program in 2001 and complete details about the admissions process for those new to Foothills may be found in [Administrative Procedure 212](#).

#### **HIGH RIVER AREA**

##### **École Joe Clark School (Jr.K - Gr. 5)**

1208 - 9th Avenue SE, High River  
403-652-2020

##### **École Senator Riley Middle School (Gr. 6 - 8)**

338 1st Avenue SE, High River  
403-652-2346

##### **École Secondaire Highwood High School (Gr. 9 - 12)**

Hwy. 2A & 12th Avenue SE, High River  
403-652-5500

#### **OKOTOKS AREA**

##### **École Percy Pegler Elementary School (Jr.K - Gr. 6)**

69 Okotoks Drive, Okotoks  
403-938-4449

##### **École Okotoks Junior High School (Gr. 7 - 9)**

1 Pacific Avenue, Okotoks  
403-938-4426

##### **École Secondaire Foothills Composite High School / Alberta High School of Fine Arts (Gr. 10 - 12)**

229 Woodhaven Drive, Okotoks  
403-938-6116