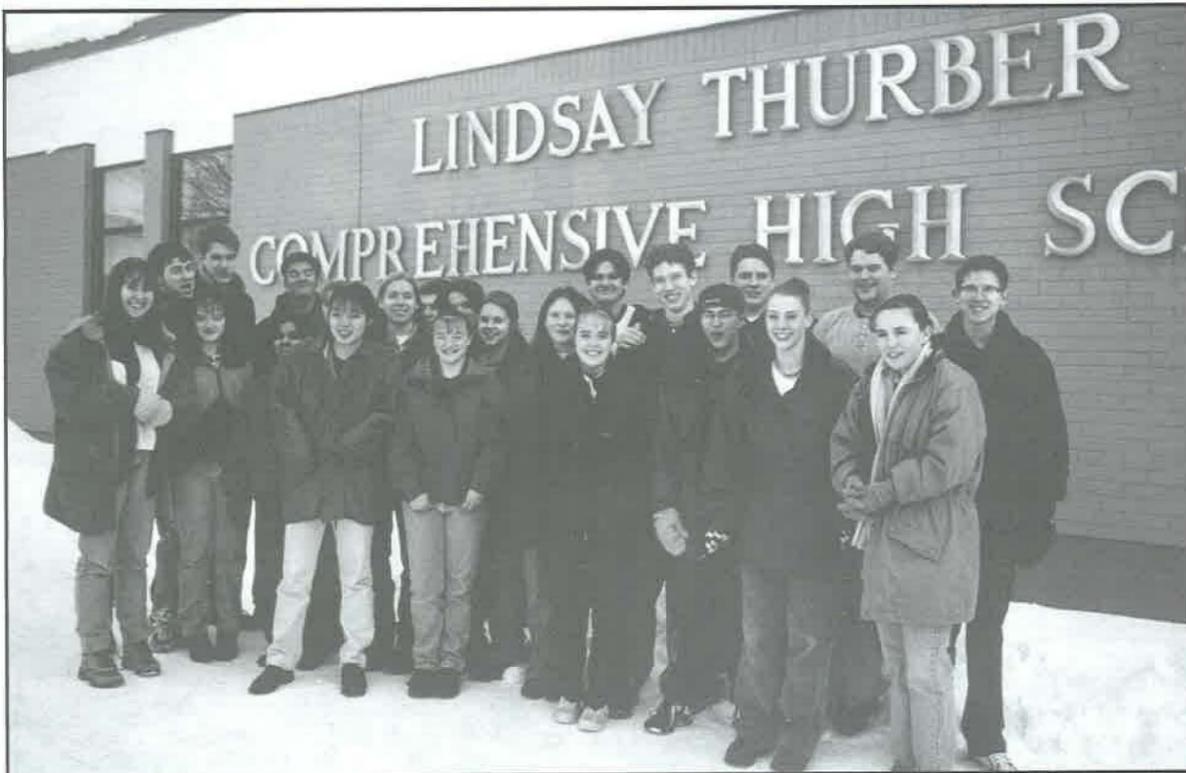


THE FRENCH IMMERSION COURIER

A CELEBRATION OF RED DEER PUBLIC SCHOOLS' FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMMES



Red Deer Public School's fifth French Immersion graduating class prepares to enter their final semester of Grade 12 at École Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School. There are nearly 600 French Immersion students enrolled in Red Deer Public Schools in Kindergarten to Grade 12.

RED DEER PUBLIC'S 5TH IMMERSION CLASS GRADUATES:

Red Deer Public School Board's 5th French Immersion class will graduate from École Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School in June 1997. French Immersion was first introduced in 1981 with only 15 students.

Chris Rozell and Jennifer Corrales are two grade 12 students who will be graduating with a bilingual certificate in June of 1997. Today there are nearly 600 students in French Immersion programmes in four schools in the Red Deer Public School District.

Bilingual diploma worth the effort

For Chris Rozell, earning his bilingual certificate was worth the effort.

"I wanted something to show for the extra effort that I have put into my education. It was an extra challenge."

"Being fluent in another language is great. A big bonus has to be that when I hosted a student from France I could understand everything he said....now I can't wait to go on the school trip to France."

When faced with the question of continuing in French Immersion after grade 8 Rozell decided to stick with the programme in high school as he enjoyed immersion and the sense of camaraderie in the class.

The grade 12 student is glad he stuck with it, saying that knowing French will be an asset for travel and the world of work.



Jennifer Corrales and Chris Rozell have been French Immersion classmates for 13 years.

Jennifer Corrales has been a classmate of Chris' for 13 years. Her mom enrolled her in French Immersion because she felt a second language would be useful to her in the future. A trip to Quebec in Grade 8 confirmed Corrales' commitment to the programme.

"I started to realize the French went beyond what I was learning in French class."

Jennifer also believes that being bilingual broadens your knowledge of the world.

"If there is a good book and I have heard about it I can read it regardless if it is in English or French....the same with T.V."

Both Chris and Jennifer agree with parents who don't speak French it was more difficult for them to help you. They got very good at translating for their parents.

Jennifer believes that she studied harder because the courses were in French. "You have to work harder.....French Immersion is definitely worth it, but the challenge isn't for everyone."

"French Immersion is the thing to do"
-Chris Rozell

Bilingual certificate offered

Grade 12 students who have completed 48 credits in French will be eligible for a bilingual certificate. In addition, Lindsay Thurber is one of the few schools that allows students to combine French Immersion with the International Baccalaureate (I.B.) Programme. Students enrolled in both programmes will require 43 credits in French for the certificate.

Beyond High School

"Knowing French will facilitate travel and enhance work opportunities. Other languages will also be relatively easy to learn.....like Spanish", said Jennifer

Chris added, "being bilingual can only improve your credentials...having been in Immersion can be an asset to you and your employer....being able to speak another language increases the number of places that you can work in the world."

What our parents say...

Why did you choose to enrol your children in Immersion?

We put our first child in French Immersion because we thought being bilingual would help him increase the possibilities for work as an adult. We kept him in Immersion and placed our other two children in Immersion because we found it to be an exceptional educational system. It is an excellent challenge for children and expands the way the children see the world. The commitment of French Immersion teachers and parents enhances the educational experience measurably.

Lynn Wilson

I enrolled my child in French Immersion because I have experienced the benefits of knowing another language. Being bilingual makes travelling abroad easier and more enjoyable. It provides the privilege of interacting with another culture. There are also greater job opportunities available.

Colleen Weir

How have your children benefited from French Immersion?

...Our daughter liked the idea! She has benefited from the extra challenge... She has had excellent teachers! Her English has definitely not suffered, she has excellent English skills. She now speaks two languages.

Sue Tuff

By the end of grade 1 my children had achieved a remarkable level of comfort with a second language. They see the use of speaking a second language, they feel it is something they can do, and the process of learning is not reduced to a list of vocabulary and irregular verbs. Beyond the linguistic advantages of French Immersion, the program provides a good, all round education at the elementary level.

Nigel Stuart

What have your children gained by being in Immersion?

Over the past four years there have been several occasions where the boys have had the opportunity to use their French. They always feel great to be able to succeed in an area that most others around cannot even attempt.

Brad and Jackey Lashmar

The Immersion program's strength lies in its power to show our children the doors that can be opened through the use of a second language. In the world that is fast becoming smaller through the use of technology, it is imperative that our children be equipped to face the challenge of future job markets. As trite as this may sound...Japanese, French, Eastern Europe, the Middle Eastern education systems to name a few, are all turning out educated children with at least 2 languages. Our children should not be left behind, but should be encouraged to be equipped to face the challenges that are here already as a result of the "shrinking of the planet".

Norma Read

What advice would you give parents considering late Immersion for their child?

I feel the most important thing in placing a child in late Immersion is, "Does my child really want to do this"? Any child that is going to be immersed into a second language must have some degree of personal commitment to the program.

Debbie Dean

Striving for Excellence



Red Deer Public School District #104

KINDERGARTEN

Acting is a big part of a French Immersion kindergarten teacher's job. We rely heavily on props to communicate with our students, said a group of kindergarten teachers. In September, the kids have absolutely no idea what we are talking about.

That means if we want the class to cut a paper in half we have scissors on hand to demonstrate.

Encouraging words, a fun approach to teaching and acting skills do the trick.

It's a step by step process

The first few weeks of the year are spent explaining the ground rules for Kindergarten. The students learn to be responsible for themselves; how to be part of a group and how to work in a classroom.

The Kindergarten teachers do much of this initiation in English.

From mid-September until December, is the teachers' biggest job - teaching the students basic French vocabulary - colours, shapes, numbers - the building blocks of the Kindergarten program.

As the school year goes on, it gets easier. The students start to understand one by one and help each other. After Christmas we usually start show and tell giving the students a chance to use the French words they have learned.

Happy kids key to success in French Immersion

The key to success is making sure the students are comfortable at school.

They may be saying... "I don't understand what the teacher says", but the most important thing is the social relationships they develop. The students learn to work well together. They support one another in learning a new language. Having fun while learning plays a big part too. We use little songs with little words and make it like a guessing game. It's really important to keep it fun and light at the beginning of the year.

Encouragement is important too.

We tell them they are doing a good job, in English, because they need to feel they are competent in their daily work and they are a little nervous about being in French Immersion.

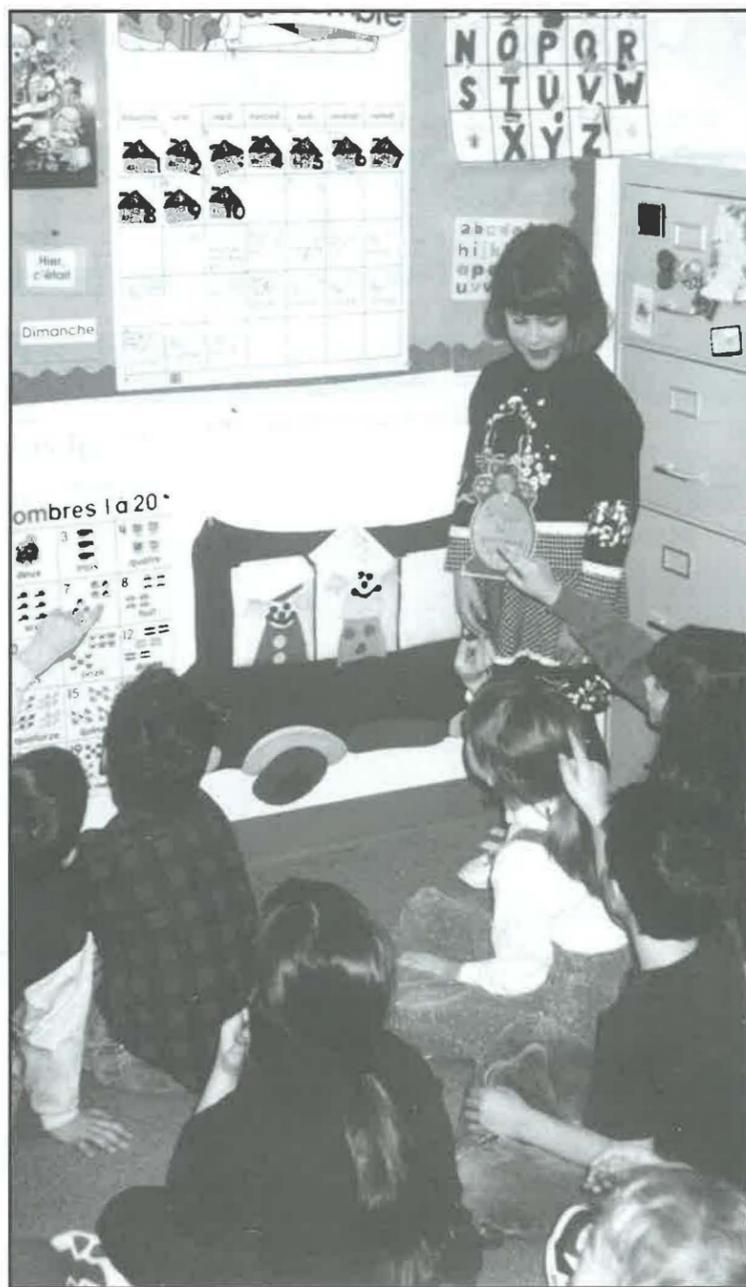
Listening skills and confidence blossom

As well as important grounding in language acquisition, the group of teachers agree that their students leave Kindergarten with excellent listening skills.

They can't be half listening and catch it. They have to be completely there. When you give directions they have to be focussed on what you are saying.

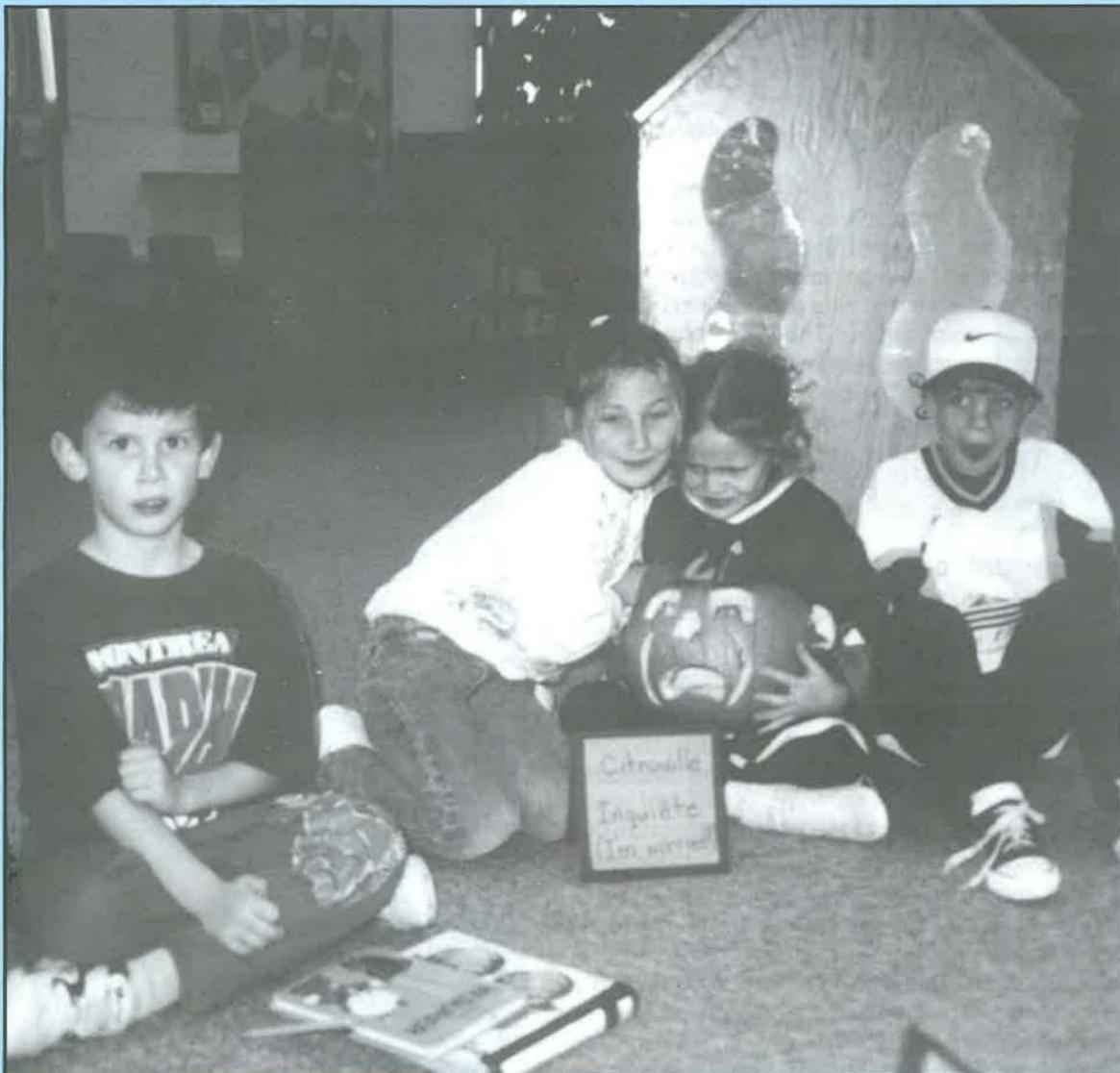
Their self-confidence also blossoms.

"I think they start out thinking - 'I don't have a clue what the teacher is talking about' and by the end they are able to joke in the language. It gives them the feeling that 'Hey I can do this'.



Grade one student Erin Joly from École Oriole Park School is the special person of the day. This calendar activity is part of the students' daily morning routine.

FRENCH IMMERSION AT A GLANCE...



École Mountview School students Nicholas Anderson-Frey, Caitlin Beaulieu, Kate Sveinson, and Shane Thomas participated in the Parkland Nurseries Pumpkin carving contest. Each group had to carve their pumpkin to show an emotion.

Do you have questions of parents about French Immersion?

Norma Read, 342-5398
Parent

Debbie Dean, 346-4600
Parent

Board of Education

Lenore Harris, Chairperson
David Hardy
Cindy Jefferies
Gordon Stewart
Lorne Goddard
Bill Stuebing
Bev Manning

Red Deer Public School Board #104

Len Luders - Superintendent
Barb Eklund - District Coordinator
4747 - 53 Street
Red Deer, AB
T4N 2E6
Phone 343-1405
Fax 347-8190
E-mail info@rdpsd104.red-deer.ab.ca

Striving for Excellence



Red Deer Public School District #104

*A special thanks to St. Albert Protestant Schools for their assistance.

GRADE ONE

Making her students comfortable in a French environment is a Grade 1 French Immersion teacher's first job. We focus on language and routine. We try to get them to understand the basic things and get them confident in the language...so they are able to work in it.

Students start off not speaking French

When the students enter Grade 1 they speak little French. But by Christmas, the students are talking quite a bit of French and after Spring Break, students are asked to communicate in French only.

Hearing the language first step

The first step in this process is to attune the students' ears to the language. Like a baby, he or she needs to hear a lot of the language before they can try to speak. They have to have a feel for it.

Body language, visual clues and choosing their words carefully are all part of a grade one teacher's strategies.

The students become very good listeners as they look for every possible clue to understand what is happening.

Immersion teachers use themes and look at subjects from all angles to help students develop vocabulary. Books, movies and speakers are all things that help to immerse the kids in the language as well as the subject material.

As confidence grows, students try out French

When they talk in French, we really encourage them. They have more self-confidence - they are more likely to try things.

French Immersion students work at the usual Grade 1 curriculum, reading and writing, except they do so in French. Progress is a little slower as they learn these skills in a second language.... But once they start, they progress quickly.



École Mountview School students Rayna Newton, Blair Palmer and Jody Brunner are making Mexican hats. Parents, Gail Brunner and Stephanie Lindeberg are giving them a helping hand.



Grade 8 students from École Centrale Intermédiaire Central Middle School meet former Prime Minister Brian Mulrooney while on an exchange in Québec

...WHERE FRENCH IMMERSION IS OFFERED

- **École Mountview School**
Kindergarten to Grade 5
4331 - 34 Street
Red Deer, AB T4N 0N9
Phone 346-5765
Fax 346-5022
Principal: Mrs. Jean McCormick
Vice Principal and Immersion Coordinator:
Maryvonne Farrand
- **École Oriole Park School**
Kindergarten to Grade 5
5 Oldbury Street
Red Deer, AB T4N 5A8
Phone 347-3731
Fax 340-3378
Principal: Maureen Dixon
Vice Principal and Immersion Coordinator: Peter Laszuk
- **École Central Middle School**
Grades 6 to 8
5121 - 48th Avenue
Red Deer, AB
T4N 3T7
Phone 346-4397
Fax 342-3783
Principal: Jerry Simonsen
Vice Principal and Immersion Coordinator: John Johnston
- **École Secondaire
Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School**
Grades 9 to 12
4204 - 58 Street
Red Deer, AB T4N 2L6
Phone 347-1171
Fax 340-1676
E-mail LTCHSInfo@rdpsd104.red-deer.ab.ca
Principal: Paul Gowans
Team Leader and Immersion Coordinator: Rob Porkka

MIDDLE SCHOOL

École Intermédiaire Central Middle School is the school which is responsible for immersion at the grades 6, 7, and 8 levels. Ours is a dual track school, which means that there are both English and French programs available. There are approximately 550 students in the school, and over a third are in the Immersion programme. There are two streams of Immersion at Middle School. The first is early, or continuing immersion, for students who have been in the program in elementary school. There are two classes at each grade level of early French Immersion. The second is late French Immersion for students who are beginning in grade 6. This is to allow late entry for students who are deciding to meet the challenge after the first five years of schooling. The two streams are merged in grade nine at Lindsay Thurber.

Late Immersion

"Basically a student considering late French Immersion needs to be a strong motivated student willing to put in an effort to learn a second language", said John Johnston, Vice principal of École Central Middle School. "We spend the first three months of grade 6 developing a good language base as well as study and organizational skills in order to give the kids a good foundation for their studies in French", added Johnston.

Challenge of French Immersion prepares students for rigours of the work world

Grade 11 student, Jason Wyman toyed with the idea of entering an English program for high school, but after considering the advantages of earning a bilingual certificate, Jason registered in LTCHS French Immersion program.

He feels the challenge of learning in a second language has better prepared him for the rigours of high school and the working world.

KIDS SPEAK ...



Hayley Goertzen
Age 6
École Mountview School,
Kindergarten.

What was it like starting French Immersion Kindergarten?

"It was sort of scary because I didn't know any of the other kids. Now it is pretty good because I know them".



Steven Kwasny
Age 6
École Mountview School,
Grade 1.

What was it like starting French Immersion?

"I like it. I could understand what the teacher was saying in French because I heard my big brothers speak in French at home. Now listen and I know what to do when the teacher says because I know a lot of French".



Pamela Pikula
Age 10
École Oriole Park School,
Grade 5.

What do you like about French Immersion?

"French is fun, and you learn different things than you do in English. We've learned all about different verbs and this year we work with the grade fours in our class. ...I like my teachers and the kids I've been with... Other languages like English and Spanish have French words in them".



Tanner Allred
Age 10
École Oriole Park School,
Grade 5.

What do you like about Immersion?

"It's fun speaking a second language... I am always learning new words that I can use in my writing and speaking"



Dan Pottage
Age 12
Grade 7 - Late immersion
École Central Middle School

What do you think about enrolling in late Immersion?

"It was a tough decision, to come to Central but I've met a lot of friends here and I'm pretty happy here. When I first started it was pretty awkward, but I got through it and it was actually a lot of fun. ...it's pretty amazing. I don't even have to think, I can just say the sentence in French. I think the teachers have been great.



Mike Januska
Age 17 LindsayThurber
Comprehensive High School - Grade 12

How do you feel French Immersion will help you in later life?

I will have a broader range of access of resources to use (ie French and English books, radio and television...) in the business world I will be able to better relate to clients from around the world.

WHAT MAKES DISTRICT PROGRAM DIFFERENT?

Dual-track French Immersion program offered in schools.

Red Deer Public Schools offer French Immersion in dual-track schools, which means French Immersion and English students are housed in the same building.

"This approach promotes tolerance and understanding among our students and provides opportunities for interaction between the English and French programs to the benefit of all our students," said high school French Immersion Team Leader, Rob Porkka.

There has been a lot of success with this approach especially at the high school level. Students are able to continue their language studies and enjoy all the options and opportunities that a large established high school has to offer.

Students may continue in French Immersion and specialized programs such as International Baccalaureate (I.B.) and Music.

Formal English instruction introduced in Grade 3

Red Deer Public Schools French Immersion schools focus on French instruction in Kindergarten through Grade 2. This is done in order to give our students a solid grounding in their second language.

In Kindergarten and through Grade 2, an environment is created that encourages students to use their new language. Once our students have a solid grounding in their second language, formal English instruction is introduced in the beginning of Grade 3.

Students do well in English as they use their French language skills to springboard their English language skills!



James Wyman, Rob Mah Ming, Jason Wyman and Bruno Payette work together in a Grade 11 Études sociales (Social Studies) class at LTCHS.

Opportunities for parental involvement:

Parents are encouraged to give input where ever possible to the immersion coordinators to help build a program that best meets their children's needs.

Curriculum Advisory Team

This committee includes, teachers and administrators from all levels. The committee's mandate is to consider issues that arise in the French Immersion program.

Canadian Parents for French (CPF)

Putting your child in French Immersion is a big step especially if you don't speak French. CPF is here to provide support for parents who have taken that plunge. CPF can be contacted at:

CPF Alberta
Box 30036 Chinook Postal Outlet
6455 Macleod Trail S.
Calgary AB T2H 2V8

School councils

All parents are welcome to get involved in their School Council.

FRENCH IMMERSION Q & A

Here are some commonly asked questions about French Immersion:

Who can register in French Immersion program?

The French Immersion program is open to all children. It is designed for children whose first language is not French.

Is the French Immersion program viewed as being a successful program?

Yes. The French Immersion model is the most researched model of second language acquisition in the world. Canada's model is used in the United States and abroad.

What effect does learning a second language have on the cognitive development of the child?

Research indicates that children who learn more than one language gain in cognitive development. Through learning a second language, children come to see the world from a second perspective, demonstrating divergent thought process development.

Why is total immersion so important in the early grades?

Children in French Immersion live in a primarily English environment. Their French Immersion classroom is in most likelihood the only place where they will have an opportunity to develop their French language skills. In the interest of giving French Immersion students a good grounding in their second language, it is best to focus exclusively on developing their French language skills in the early grades.

Why continue immersion at the High School?

High school gives students the opportunity to use, perfect, and improve both written and oral French. Brain research shows the more students are exposed to a second language at a young age the more likely they will retain the skill in later life... like any skill you must use it!

Will students in French Immersion loose their English?

Absolutely not. Beyond their classroom, French Immersion students are surrounded by English - at home, and through the media. Students in French Immersion simply acquire a second language in addition to their mother tongue. In Red Deer Public Schools, formal English Language Arts is not introduced until Grade 3 and students' English and content subject skills are at par with or above their counterparts in English language programs by the beginning of Middle school.

More Questions?

A great resource book is available from the Immersion schools which is entitled:

YES YOU CAN HELP!

A Guide for French Immersion Parents

