



FRENCH PROGRAMS IN HALTON



Residents of the Halton Region may select from three approaches to French instruction:

- the mandatory 200 minutes/week program of Core French beginning in Grade 4;
- an optional 50% English, 50% French, Early Immersion program beginning in Grade 1; or
- an optional 50% English, 50% French, Extended (Late Immersion) program beginning in Grade 7 after successful completion of the Grade 6 Core French program (available only at Sir Ernest MacMillan School in Burlington).

Parent information meetings regarding the Immersion programs will be held in January. Applications for the Grade 1 and Grade 7 programs beginning in September will be accepted after the information evenings during the last week of January (at your home school).

IMMERSION PROGRAMS IN HALTON

Students spend 50% of their day focusing on French Language Arts and expectations from other curriculum areas (e.g., Social Science) in French. The remaining portion of their program is taken in English at the same school.

The programs are designed for students from non-French families. No previous French language experience is necessary for Early Immersion.

WHY IMMERSION?

Students in both the Early and Late Immersion programs have the opportunity to acquire a proficiency in the French language, which far exceeds that of students in Core French. Benefits to students enrolled in the program include: a deeper understanding of French and French-speaking cultures, a greater number of careers options, a lifelong ability to communicate in French, and a facility for learning other languages.

WHY EARLY IMMERSION?

An early beginning in French (Grade 1) means those students can study it over a longer time. This permits greater oral mastery of the language. This entry point also allows children to become accustomed to school, and can be observed by teachers before their parents/guardians make a decision on the program. The Junior and Senior Kindergarten years in English allow the child to use English in a school context and to develop English skills early and in a language rich environment.

WHY EXTENDED FRENCH/LATE IMMERSION?

Extended French provides an opportunity for those who did not enter the Early Immersion program, and who enjoy Core French, to seek an added challenge and to develop their fluency in French.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The Ontario curriculum documents distributed by the Ministry of Education outline the curriculum to be taught in Grades 1-8 in our province. The expectations in these documents for Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Studies, The Arts, and Physical and Health Education are addressed in the English and French sides of the

Immersion program. The Ministry released the Elementary Immersion and Extended French Language Arts curriculum in June 2001. A document for use in Halton schools, which aligns the Ministry Immersion Curriculum expectations with our 50/50 Immersion program, was developed in 2003.

There may be variations, from school to school, in specific subjects taught in French. This depends on school-based decisions and teacher expertise.

The Ontario curriculum documents encourage teachers to plan integrated curriculum, which makes connections among traditional subjects. This has implications for Immersion programs. Content can no longer be defined strictly in terms of the traditional subjects; however, students will still spend 50% of their day with French as the language of instruction.

SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Immersion programs are offered in many of Halton's secondary schools.

L. B. Pearson Secondary School offers Extended French.

The new Ontario curriculum documents distributed by the Ministry of Education and Training outline the curriculum (including French Language Arts) to be taught in Grades 9-12 in our province.



By the end of secondary school, students in Extended French must complete seven credits and Early Immersion students must complete ten credits in French. Possible courses may include, but are not limited to, French Language Arts, Business, Geography, History, Careers, Civics, Mathematics, Physical Education and Health, and Science. Schools try to optimize the opportunities for Immersion students to access elective courses.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Are Immersion programs approved by the province?

In the Education Act, 1974, the Ministry policy document Teaching and Learning French as a Second Language in the 1980s, issued April 1984, and Ministry Memorandum 1977-78:84, Immersion and Extended French courses are recognized as valid approaches which do not require special approval.

2. How do programs in other school boards differ from Halton?

Some boards begin Early Immersion in Kindergarten. Halton's program begins in Grade 1 so that children will be accustomed to school and can be observed by teachers before their parents/guardians make a decision on the program. Many boards begin their Immersion programs with 100% French instruction, adding English Language Arts in Grade 2 or later, gradually increasing the percentage of English to 50% by Grade 5 or 6. Some Extended French programs are taught entirely in French except for English Language Arts periods.

3. How long has the Halton District School Board offered these programs?

Halton's Immersion programs have been in existence since September 1978.

4. What qualifications are necessary to be an Immersion teacher?

Teachers must hold an Ontario Teaching Certificate and have successfully completed a methodology course in teaching French as a Second Language. They must speak and write French with near-native fluency.

5. What type of French will the students learn?

Students learn standard international French.

6. Where will the Immersion programs be offered?

Early Immersion programs are available in French Centres. An Immersion Centre is a school, which, in addition to pupils from its own catchment area, serves students who are transported from their home school. Some centres have full English as well as Immersion classes. Others have only Immersion classes.

Extended French is offered only at Sir E. MacMillan School in Burlington.

7. *Will there be room for everyone in the Immersion programs?*

Yes.

8. *Can I request optional attendance for JK/SK in an Immersion Centre?*

Parents may apply for Optional Attendance at schools where the total enrolment is less than the capacity of the school. Approval of optional attendance applications is at the discretion of the school principal. Completion of the Optional Attendance application should be done at the time of kindergarten registration at the designated English program home school. Parents need to be aware, however, that many schools offering French Immersion are over capacity and will not be accepting optional attendance applications. Approval of Optional Attendance applications may not occur until late June.

9. *Will transportation be provided?*

Early immersion students who are eligible for transportation under board policy will be picked up at centralized pickup points. In many cases, these points are the child's home school.

Transportation to the late immersion program (located at S.E. MacMillan Elementary School and L.B. Pearson Secondary School in Burlington) is the responsibility of the parent.

10. *Can parents withdraw their child from the Immersion programs?*

Yes, however, parents, teachers and principals will work together to provide appropriate programs in order to avoid demitting children from the Immersion programs unnecessarily.

If students leave the program, they must return to their home school.

11. *How does the content in Immersion and Extended French programs differ from that of a full English program?*

The academic content in the Immersion programs is the same as the content in a full English program and follows the approved Ministry and Halton documents.

12. *What effect does the immersion program have on a child's English language skills?*

Many years of testing and research show that French Immersion has no negative effect on the development of English language skills. Immersion students generally outperform English-only students on the Ontario EQAO standardized test.

13. *Is the program suitable for my child?*

The Halton District School Board has no pre-test or minimum ability required for admission to the Early or Late Immersion programs. Parents, who would like more input to help them with the decision to enrol their child, should meet with their child's present teacher and/or principal. The final decision to enter the program rests with the students and parents.

There are risk factors when:

- children are below the expected standard in their first language;
- children have auditory or visual difficulties;
- support at home is divided;
- students do not want to be in the program;
- a child's emotional well-being is suffering.



14. May students enter the Immersion programs at any time during the school year?

Students must have equivalent French experiences to enter the programs after the first 30 school days. Students transferring into Halton with French background may be assessed to determine their ability to enter Halton's programs.



Learn a language, share a culture, change the world.

V. Lacey, OMLTA Keynote address