



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



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.



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

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



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



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 Bourgojn, 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

Arnett, K., & Bourgoin, R. (2017). *Access for Success: Making Inclusion Work for Language Learners*. Pearson Education Canada.

Bournot-Trites, M., & Tellowitz, U. (2002, January). *Report of Current Research on the Effects of Second Language Learning on First Language Literacy Skills*. Atlantic Provinces Educational Foundation.

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Genesee, F. (2007, August). French Immersion and At-Risk Students: A Review of Research Evidence. *The Canadian Modern Language Review / La revue canadienne des langues vivantes*, 63(5), 654-687. 10.1353/cml.2008.0004