

 **FPFA**
Fédération des parents
francophones de l'Alberta



OR



FRANCOPHONE SCHOOL

IMMERSION SCHOOL



FRANCOPHONE SCHOOL



IMMERSION SCHOOL



Education in French - a right or a privilege?

Alberta Education Act

Since 1982, francophones in Canada have the right to French-language education for their children.

Legal

Provincial governments ensure the right to access programs and services in French as a first language for eligible students under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Education Act.

School Board Policy

Since 1968, many Canadian school boards have chosen to offer French immersion programs in some of their schools.

Legal

Provincial governments authorize school boards to teach French as a second language courses and French immersion programs; in Alberta, approximately 40 out of 57 school boards do so.

For which students?

Francophone education is tailored for students whose parent has French as their first/native language.

Constitutional and Legal Fact

Section 23 of the Charter requires provincial and territorial governments to provide education to Canadians in the official language of their choice, even in areas where a minority of residents speaks that language.

The French immersion program is tailored for children whose parent wishes them to learn French as a second or additional language.

Constitutional and Legal Facts

Canadian parents do not have a constitutional right to a French immersion program or French-language education for their children anywhere in Canada, except in Quebec.

In Alberta, alternative education programs focus on a particular language (e. g. French), culture, religion, or subject matter, or use a specific teaching philosophy.

In Canada, neither provincial governments nor school boards are required to offer French immersion programming.

Is this the right choice for my child?

A French-language school may be suitable for a student who:

- Has a parent whose first language learned and still understood is French;
- Has a parent who received primary education in French in Canada;
- Has a sibling who is currently receiving or has received primary or secondary education in French in Canada (Section 23 of the Charter);
- Has parents of francophone origins who wish to introduce them to the French language and francophone identity and cultures;
- Has parents who wish to maintain their child's linguistic proficiency in French and francophone cultural identity (e. g. immigrant parents or permanent residents).

The French immersion program may be suitable for a student whose first language is not French.



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Which students are eligible?

The francophone school is for children who are considered rights holders as defined by Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There are three categories of eligibility:

1. A child born in Canada whose parent learned French as their first language and still understands it French.
2. Siblings of a child who is already attending a French-language school.
3. A child born in Canada whose parent received primary-school (Grades 1 to 6) instruction in French in Canada.

Francophone Education Authorities (school boards) may also admit:

- A child whose parent is not Canadian, but comes from countries where French is an official language.
- A child whose parent wants their child to retain their French language skills and francophone identity and culture (e.g., a francophone immigrant who is a permanent resident of Canada).
- A child whose grandparent has French as their first language, and who still understands French.

Constitutional and Legal Fact

According to Section 23 of the Charter, any citizen of Canada is eligible if:

- Their first language learned and still understood is that of the French-speaking or English-speaking minority of the province in which they reside;
- They have received their primary education in French or English in Canada, and;
- They reside in a province where the language in which they received their instruction is that of the French-speaking or English-speaking minority of the province.

In either case, they have the right to have their children educated in that language at the primary and secondary levels.

A Canadian citizen whose child has received or is receiving their primary or secondary education in French or English has the right to have all their children educated in that language at the primary and secondary levels.

Exception

Only the school board (or school administration) can grant exceptions.

The French immersion program is:

- Designed for students who want to learn French as a second or additional language.
- Intended for students belonging to the linguistic majority (English-speaking) as well as other linguistic groups.

Constitutional and Legal Fact

Provincial governments are not required to offer a French immersion program, and there are no laws or regulations governing this program.

School boards that choose to offer a French immersion program have the authority to decide on the conditions for admission, school selection, grade levels, curriculum, number of courses, and requirements for completion.



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What are the aims and objectives?

The aim of a francophone school is to develop a francophone student who is bilingual in French and English.

The main objectives of a francophone school are:

- Mastery of the French language;
- Knowledge and appreciation of the French language and culture;
- Building a positive francophone identity;
- Developing a sense of belonging to the francophone community;
- Rooting oneself in francophone identity and culture, and actively integrating into the francophone community.

The aim of a French immersion program is for non-francophone students to develop communication skills in Canada's official languages.

The main objectives of French immersion are:

- Acquiring functional proficiency in French;
- Learning a second language in addition to mastering English;
- Providing opportunities to learn and appreciate the French language and culture;
- Offering an intensive second language program that allows students to learn French while studying a number of subjects in French.

What is the objective of bilingualism?

The student:

- Develops strong proficiency in French as a first language;
- Acquires the ability to communicate fluently in both French and English;
- Develops a high level of bilingualism for life.

The student:

- Develops functional proficiency in French as a second/additional language;
- Acquires the ability to communicate in French as a second language;
- Learns a second/additional language, in addition to mastering English.

What is the objective for culture and identity?

The student:

- Becomes a proud francophone and takes pride in belonging to the francophone community;
- Develops their identity and sense of belonging to the francophone culture;
- Actively participates in the francophone community.

The student:

- Becomes a proud citizen who knows and appreciates the language and culture of francophones;
- Has the opportunity to learn about and appreciate the language and culture of francophones.



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What are the advantages for my child?

After completing Grade 12, the student will:

- Have fully mastered French as a first language and have a positive attitude towards this language.
- Identify with and integrate into the francophone culture and community.
- Have acquired full proficiency in English.
- Be able to pursue post-secondary education and employment opportunities in French, English, or both languages.
- Develop a greater appreciation for other languages, cultures and communities in Canada and around the world.
- Obtain an Alberta High School Diploma (Francophone).

After completing the immersion program, the student will:

- Have acquired functional skills in French.
- Be able to live, work and pursue post-secondary education in French, English, or both languages.
- Be able to participate in francophone culture and demonstrate understanding and appreciation for it.
- Have acquired full proficiency in English.
- Develop a greater appreciation for other languages, cultures and communities in Canada and around the world.
- Have the option to request a French version of the Alberta High School Diploma.

What is the language of instruction?

The language of instruction is French. English is taught beginning in Grade 3 (Grade 1 in some schools).

Legal Fact

Instruction is provided entirely in French, except for the English language course, which is mandatory beginning in Grade 3.

School boards decide which courses will be offered in French and at what grade levels. For example, some Late Immersion Programs may begin in Grade 5 or Grade 7.

Legal Fact

The Alberta Education Act does not mandate the language of instruction in immersion programs.

What is the learning context?

Education is offered in French from kindergarten to Grade 12, except for the English Language Arts course, which is offered in English.

English language instruction is integrated from the early years of schooling. Depending on the child's needs in learning English, they may receive additional support through a supplementary program, as needed and at the appropriate time.

Instruction is primarily in French. Some subjects, and sometimes all courses, except for English Language Arts, are offered in French.

At the beginning, French is taught intensively. The student acquires basic skills in French in order to learn to read and begin studying other subjects such as mathematics, science, social studies and fine arts.



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At what grade level can my child begin?

The child can enrol in a francophone school as early as kindergarten, Grade 1 or any other grade level.

If the child speaks little or no French at the time of entry into school, they will benefit from various programs and services to help them learn French and integrate into the francophone community.

Most schools offer French immersion programming beginning in kindergarten or Grade 1.

Some schools offer Late Immersion Programs beginning in Grades 5 or 7.

Will my child learn English?

Students in francophone schools and in French immersion programs follow the same English Language Arts curriculum as other students in the province.

The acquisition of literacy skills in reading and writing is done in both French and English. Students develop and master their skills in French and transfer them to English learning, and vice versa.

Do students follow the same curriculum as students in English schools?

The instruction of all subjects is provided to the student according to the Alberta Education Program of Studies. In Alberta, there is only one curriculum mandated by the Ministry of Education for all public, catholic, and francophone schools to follow.

Generally, the textbooks used are similar, except for the French language course.

What percentage of the school day is conducted in French?

100 % in French in kindergarten.
100 % in French in Grades 1 and 2.
80 % in French from Grades 4 to 12.

100 % in French in kindergarten.
70-100 % in French in Grades 1 and 2.
60-80 % in French in Grades 4 to 6.
20-70 % in French in Grades 7 to 12.



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What is the language of communication at school?

Children are familiar with French or have been exposed to the language before entering school.

French is not only the language of instruction, but also the language of communication.

Students are addressed in French at all times and in all places.

Few children are familiar with French or have been exposed to the language before entering school.

The language of communication is English, especially with parents.

Students are typically addressed in French in class if the course is offered in French. However, the use of French may vary in other settings.

What is the language of communication with parents?

The language of communication between the home, school and school authority is typically French. Parents who do not speak French may benefit from various programs and tools provided by the school to support their child's school life.

The policy of Francophone Education Authorities states that all written communication with parents must be in French.

Parents who do not speak French may request that the school communicate with them in English.

The language of communication between the home and school is English.

What is the language spoken by the teachers?

All school staff always communicate with the students in French.

The vast majority of teachers have French as their first language. Even those who are not originally francophone still have a good command of French.

In some schools, some English teachers are not bilingual.

The French-speaking staff communicate with the students in French in the classroom and sometimes outside the classroom.

The first language of the teachers is not necessarily French.



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What language do support staff speak?

The support staff (educational assistants, secretaries) have French as their first language. Those who are not native French speakers still have a good command of French.

In some cases, custodians and bus drivers may not speak French.

It is rather rare for support staff to speak French.

How are students assessed?

The standards used to evaluate students' work in French take into account that it is their first language.

The standards used to evaluate students' work in English take into account that they need to achieve a high level of proficiency in that language.

The standards used to evaluate students' work in French take into account that it is their second or third language.

The standards used to evaluate students' work in English take into account that it is their first or second language.

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What diploma does the student receive (Grade 12)?

The student receives a diploma from the Ministry of Education that validates their level of French and English. This diploma provides the opportunity to attend university in either French or English.

The student obtains a Diplôme d'études secondaires de l'Alberta (francophone).

The student receives a diploma in English from the Ministry of Education. This diploma provides the opportunity to attend university in English and, in some cases, in French.

The student may request to receive a French version of the Diplôme d'études secondaires de l'Alberta.



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Are the students doing well?

Generally, students perform well to very well in written tests in French and English in grades 6, 9 and 12.

In French, these students excel in oral communication, speaking French with ease.

In English, these students excel in oral communication, speaking English without an accent.

*These students have a higher level of linguistic confidence.

Canadian research shows that Grade 12 graduates from French-language schools are as competent as their English-speaking counterparts, and in some cases, even stronger, based on their results in provincial exams for English Language Arts.

*Language insecurity An expression that refers to a feeling of inferiority or incompetence when expressing oneself in French, even if it is one's native language.

Generally, students perform well in written tests in Grades 6, 9 and 12, both in French and English.

In French, these students tend to perform less well in oral assessments, often speaking with an accent.

In English, these students excel in oral assessments, speaking English without an accent.

*These students may experience greater French language insecurity.

Canadian research shows that Grade 12 students in French immersion programs generally achieve a B2 level on the international DELF (Diplôme d'études en langue française) test, which means they can effectively interact with native French speakers and understand and produce complex oral and written texts.

*Language insecurity An expression that refers to a feeling of inferiority or incompetence when expressing oneself in French, even if it is one's native language.

What do cultural activities add?

They stir and solidify the identity and pride of their francophone origins.

They contribute to developing an appreciation for the French language and culture.

In which language are extracurricular activities offered?

All activities are conducted in French.

The student benefits from solid and dynamic school and extracurricular activities where the encounter with the French language and francophone cultures serves as a complement to their experience at home and in their community.

The activities are mostly offered in English.

Some school and extracurricular activities may be offered in French to allow for the development of language skills and appreciation of the culture.



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Do the teachers speak French?

Most teachers are of French origin and culture, and they live their daily lives in French.

They are integrated into the francophone community.

They carry out the educational and cultural mission of the school.

The teachers are either francophones or francophiles who are proficient in French.

They have knowledge of French culture.

They carry out the mission of French as a second language.

Do school administrators speak French?

All administrators are francophones.

The language used for administration in the school is French.

The administrators can be either anglophones or francophones.

The language used for administration in the school is English.

What is the parent's role?

The parent:

- identifies with the French language and culture.
- actively integrates and participates in the francophone community life with their child.
- can participate in the school council.
- supports the francophone school.

The parent:

- is supportive of the French language and culture.
- can provide opportunities for their child to experience French outside of school.
- can participate in the school council.
- supports the immersion program.

In what kind of school is the program offered?

Most often, the francophone program is offered in a separate and homogeneous French school. Therefore, the francophone school is a milieu where linguistic and cultural vitality evolves.

Generally, the immersion program is offered in a bilingual learning environment (dual-track school). In some cases, the program is offered in an all-immersion school (immersion centre).



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How many students are enrolled in the two programs in Alberta?

In 2019-2020, 8,434 students attended 42 francophone schools.

In 2019-2020, 45,945 students attended 232 schools that offered an immersion program.

Who operates the two offerings in Alberta?

The francophone schools are operated by four Francophone Regional Authorities (school boards) who have similar powers as the 57 school boards, except for the collection of school taxes.

The immersion program is offered by approximately 40 school boards.

Are there fees for bus transportation?

School transportation is provided free of charge to all students attending a francophone school within their designated attendance area.

Generally, school transportation is fee-based.

SOURCES

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