

**A PARENT HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS OF FRENCH IMMERSION STUDENTS**

by

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### **Abstract**

Parents who have chosen a French immersion education for their children, at times, feel unable to help their children at home or feel that they may unknowingly negatively affect their children's learning by doing activities in English. This project is the creation of a parent handbook for these parents. This project was focused on giving parents suggestions, strategies, and ways to support their children with their homework and with their overall learning. Through the use of content analysis of five other parent handbooks, this handbook was created. Parent involvement in their children's education is an important positive influence on the achievement of all children. With this handbook, parents of French immersion students have been given concrete, easy to use ways to involvement themselves in their children's learning.

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This thesis is dedicated to the parents—past, present, and future—who have walked through the doors of my school with the need to know how to work with their children to encourage and support their continued learning.

I would especially like to acknowledge and thank my husband of 20 years, Bruce, who, without his encouragement, love, and support, I would not have been able to work on this project. Also, I would like to thank my children, Daniel, Jocelyn, and Spencer for allowing me to take time away from their lives to pursue my own educational goals.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The French immersion program has existed in Coast Mountain School District for over 20 years. Yet it is with trepidation that many non-French-speaking parents enroll their children into this program. As an educator and administrator in the French immersion program, I have spoken with many parents over the past 20 years. In speaking with these parents, I know that they take into consideration the benefits of learning a second language and the challenge that this decision could present for their children. They look at the school's programs, facilities, and educational expectations. They base their decision on these factors and the underlying belief that educating their children in a French immersion program will lead to future success.

Serious anxiety usually sets in for the parents during the second or third year of their children learning in French. Their children have, in some ways, surpassed the parents' knowledge of French. Parents at this point are unsure of how to support their children with their school work. They do not want to impact negatively their children's learning by working with them in English but they also feel unable to help their children in French. They are caught in the middle of two languages and do not know which way to turn. Open communication between parents and teachers can help with this frustration but cannot always be counted on. For every student's continued success it is important that the school - home support connection be nurtured and that all parents are provided with strategies to help support their child's educational goals.

At École Mountainview, we provide our students with all of their education in French, the interactions between students and school personnel are in French, the interactions between staff are in French, announcements are made in French, and the French

language is promoted throughout our building. But when the students go home it is to an English environment. Most of our parents are non-French-speaking and are unsure of how to help their children in French. This project, a parent handbook, has been created to provide our parents with strategies and ways to support their children throughout the French immersion program.

### Significance of the Project

This project consists of a parent handbook which provides the parents of students at École Mountainview with ideas on how to support their children throughout the French immersion program. Since most of our families are English speaking one of the foci of this project is to provide strategies and ideas that English speaking parents can use to help their children at home. As well, this parent handbook was created so that English-speaking parents can access it and can easily help their children and feel that they can contribute to their children's educational success. In providing parents with an easy to access and to use handbook I am hoping to encourage more of our parents to work with their children and to therefore create an environment of educational importance at home.

In my experience as an educator and administrator in the French immersion program, I have witnessed parents struggling with the same difficulty year after year: how to support their children if the parents do not speak French. It is a common dilemma that many French immersion parents face and it is not easily resolved. Each plateau of learning brings with it different demands. The support that kindergarten parents will give to their children will be different than the Grade 2 parents as well as the support that the upper elementary students will need. The common theme is that parents want to be involved with their children's

learning but are stymied as to how to do this. They want to enhance their children's learning not hamper it. The language proves to be the sticking point.

It is encouraging that the parents at our school want to be involved in their children's education and this intention must be fostered. Studies have shown that parental involvement has a positive effect on student achievement (Burke & Hara, 1998; Epstein et al, 1997; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeyes, 2005; Redding et al, 2004). In my experience, the parents of French immersion students support the program, are fairly actively involved at the school, and take an interest in what their children are learning. This support must be nurtured by the school not simply taken for granted. For as many parents that I have spoken to on this topic I feel that there are as many, if not more, that have the same concern but are simply not voicing it. Not all French immersion parents have the skills or the knowledge to actively support their children as they learn in a second language. The family demographics in my school have changed over the past two decades. There are families from different socio-economic, language, and cultural backgrounds that are now part of our school. Instead of adding to the parents' frustration we need to provide these parents with clear, simple strategies to help support their children.

Schools have a clear intention to encourage the home-school connection. The school and families should work together to improve the learning of all of the students. When the home support is lacking it is up to the school to reach out and work towards empowering these parents. I believe that parents want to be included in what is happening in their children's education and with the French immersion program they will need to be shown ways to do this. As the administrator of this school I believe that it is part of my moral purpose to both my students and their families to develop ways to nurture the involvement

of our parents with their children's education and with their school. To further develop the academic skills of our students we must access the, as of yet, under-utilized source of our parents willingness to be involved at our school. When parents and the school work together to support children's learning everyone benefits.

Parental involvement in their children's learning plays a significant role in students' views on education and schooling (Burke & Hara, 1998). Parents' opinions, beliefs, and ideas influence the way their children perceive the world. If the parents believe in the importance of education, the children will be encouraged to see the value of learning. When parents make time to work with their children with reading, completing projects, or homework they are communicating to their children that they believe school is important. But when the children are learning in another language parents feel unable to help. Although the parents value education and the importance of learning they are frustrated by the language in which their children are learning.

Parents of children attending a French immersion school are, from the outside, a somewhat isolated group. They have made a choice to send their children to a French immersion school even though they do not speak French. Their social community may not be the school community and may not understand the difficulties they may face as French immersion parents. Their social community may even go to the extent of indicating that they made the choice of sending their children to a French immersion program so "deal with it". But on the inside these parents are the same as non-immersion parents in that they want to support their children in their learning. But unlike non-immersion parents they feel this may not be possible because of the language barrier. For non-immersion parents it is a simple task to review their children's homework, to see if there are any learning difficulties

with their children, and to help with various projects at home. But for French immersion parents this can be a daunting task and one that they do not feel competent in accomplishing even though the commitment to support their children is evident. In a study on French immersion parent involvement in the classroom, Sylvaine von Mende (2000) describes French immersion parents as “the child looking through the metal fence, waiting to be invited to come over to play” (p. 3). I felt this comment illustrated perfectly how our parents may feel when trying to support their children. This parent handbook is a first step to enabling our parents to participate in the learning of their children and to invite them over to play.

This handbook has been created to help alleviate some of the frustrations that many of our parents may have when it comes to supporting their children. The handbook has been written based on solid research as well as what I believe is pertinent to our school families. The handbook has been constructed with a focus on the specific needs of French immersion parents to be able to support their children’s learning.

### Background of the Project

École Mountainview is a single-track French immersion elementary school in the northern community of Terrace. The school does not have a catchment area therefore the students come from various areas in and around Terrace. The majority of the students are from a middle class socio-economic background with dual parent families. We have very few students with behavioural challenges. In the past few years the number of learning-challenged students that attend the school has increased. This may be due to the fact that we now have learner support for the students in French. In the 2011-2012 school year, the school enrollment was 155 students with 22 % of these having First Nations’ ancestry.

About 20 % of our students accessed learner support during the school year with two students being put forth for a psycho-educational assessment. Typically the majority of our students are meeting or approaching grade level performance standards in all subject areas.

As the administrator of this school I have spoken to many French immersion parents over the years. The consistent concern by parents centered on how to support their children at home when they did not speak French. I would speak to them about reading in English, making time for homework, looking at the Ministry of Education website for ideas, and talking with the teacher. I feel that making a few light suggestions to parents is no longer enough. I owe it to our students and parents to give more pointed suggestions, more strategies to deal with homework, and more information in general to our families. Our parents need and want to be enabled to support their children in attaining their learning goals and this parent handbook will be a beginning.

Our parents make attempts to seek this counsel from the classroom teacher and I have found that some of the teachers on staff were more knowledgeable about helping parents while there are some teachers that felt that the parents did not need to do anything except sign an agenda. As the school leader I felt it was part of my duty to our families to get some information about what is creating this barrier between our parents and some of our teachers. At staff meetings we have discussed the lack of parent support and the source of this deficiency. From some of the teachers, the fact that the students were learning in French and parents did not speak French was the general issue. Some teachers mentioned that they do not feel comfortable having Anglophone parents helping with French work. Also, some teachers spoke to the fact that they did not know how to communicate to parents ways for them to help at home. Since there is such a disparity between what the various



classroom teachers do in terms of parent involvement and support, having a single handbook that the parents can access was important. This parent handbook will not only assist the parents but will allay some of the fears that the teachers have when confronted with the question of how to help parents with their children's learning.

### Personal Location

I am the sole administrator at École Mountainview. For my position, I have administration time of 60% and teaching time of 40%. Last year, I taught the English Language Arts curriculum for the Grade 5/6 class as well as being the school librarian. This year I am the learner support teacher and the English teacher for the Grade 5/6 class. I have taught for over 20 years and have been in administration for five years. I have been involved with the French immersion program since I began teaching both as an educator and as a parent. Two of my three children are in the French immersion program. As a parent of French immersion students I feel this brings an added dimension to the research I will be doing as well as having another perspective in which to review the information.

Over the past year our administrators group has been involved in work with Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser that centred on our school growth plans. These two change theorists encouraged us to use the spiral of enquiry when looking at our growth plans. In discussions with our administrators group, with the school's parent council and with our Parent Advisory Council (PAC), it came to light that parents were not connected to the school. We discussed the possible causes and one that was evident was that parents were apprehensive about the language their children were learning in. They could not speak French and did not know how to help their children. These discussions as well as speaking with various parents lead me to look at creating a handbook for our school. This is a first

step to supporting our parent community. I am also looking to create learning based parent workshops. Our students can only benefit by creating more of a link from the school to their home.

### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to create a French immersion parent handbook. The underlying goal is to encourage the continued parental support for the students of our school. I am hoping to remove some of the frustrations that they are feeling when trying to support their children's learning at home by providing parents with an easy to access and use handbook. In delving into the realm of parent involvement I believe this handbook is an important first step towards having parents participate in their children's learning. The spin-off to the parent involvement research I have done is to look at using the handbook as a basis for creating parent workshops related to the topics in the handbook. Thus, giving the parents hands on activities to do at home with their children.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I will be discussing aspects of research on the achievement of French immersion students, parental involvement and student achievement, French immersion parents, and handbooks. The review will begin with discussions on the studies of the achievement of French immersion students with the focus on Early French immersion students, as that is the demographic with which I work. The section on parental support and student achievement will examine the positive connection between parent involvement and student achievement. In this section, I will also discuss the theory of linguistic interdependency (Cummins, 1979) as information for parents to dispel their fears around helping their children in English. I will also have a short section on parents of French immersion students of which there exists very little research. The final section will have summations of the five French immersion parent handbooks which I selected to use as research tools in creating my own parent handbook.

### Achievement of French immersion Students

The national French immersion program and its students have been the focus of much research since the inception of the program in Canada. One major theme that is central to this focus has been the achievement of these students and the effect of learning in a second language on their academic progress. In studies on the cognitive benefits of second language learning the evidence has been positive (Baker, 2006; Cummins, 1979; Peal & Lambert, 1962). In a review of studies on the cognitive benefits of second language learning, Lazaruk (2007) found these studies pointed to the positive effects of learning a second language on the thinking of the students. In the article, Lazaruk examined research conducted on French immersion students in Canada. Many of the studies indicated possible

academic benefits for these students. In learning French as a second language students may become more flexible thinkers.

In reviewing the research and connecting this information with what was contained in the five handbooks I have concluded that students who are learning in a second language have:

- heightened mental flexibility
- heightened creative thinking abilities
- greater communicative sensitivity
- enhanced metalinguistic awareness
- a higher degree of ease with problem solving
- heightened listening skills

Another area that has been heavily researched is literacy achievement in French immersion students. Cummins (1998) reviewed French immersion research and asserted that early French immersion students achieve consistently in French without any disadvantage to their English skills. Furthermore once English is introduced as a subject to early French immersion students they usually achieve similar scores in most aspects of the English language arts curriculum as their English peers within a year.

Mary Allen (2004) accessed the results of the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) for the year 2000. PISA assesses the achievement of 15 year olds in three areas: reading literacy, mathematical literacy, and scientific literacy. Across Canada about 30 000 children participated in the PISA 2000. Allen found that French immersion students across Canada outperformed their English peers in all provinces except Manitoba in reading literacy. In the article there is information on what the reading literacy evaluated

and it is more than a basic reading comprehension test but looks at “the ability to understand, use and reflect on written texts in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate effectively in society” (Allen, 2004 p. 7).

Genesee (2012) has reviewed research on French immersion students and literacy achievement. He posited five questions relating to the research. In one question he examined the early research on the abilities of French immersion students in literacy. Genesee related that this research indicated that French immersion students attain similar achievement in English literacy as their English schooled peers once English has been introduced as a subject. He also stated that more current research findings continue to support the postulation that French immersion students achieve as well as their non-immersion peers in English language arts.

According to Alberta Education (2012) and the British Columbia Ministry of Education (2012), French immersion students achieve as well or better than their English peers. In answering the question from parents about the achievement of French immersion students the Ministry of Education of Alberta accessed an analysis of data conducted by the Learner Assessment in November 2010. The data indicated that French immersion students do well not only in French and English but also in other subject areas. The results were based on the achievement of students in Grades 6, 9, and 12. By Grade 9, more than 30 % of French immersion students are at the standard of excellence in English and math which is more than 10% above their non-immersion peer group. When students in Alberta are finishing their schooling in Grade 12 they take diploma exams. The data indicated that the students in French immersion achieved above the provincial average in all subject areas (Alberta Education, 2012).

As well, the Ministry of Education of British Columbia had results for Grade 4 and Grade 7 students for the provincially administered Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) for the years 2004 to 2007 on their website. The FSA assesses reading comprehension, writing, and numeracy and is conducted on a yearly basis. The data chart had a comparison of French immersion students and all students only indicating the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations. Overall the French immersion students were either at par or above their peers in meeting or exceeding expectations in all three areas (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2012).

Although I have not chosen to have a specific section in my handbook relating the research about the achievement of French immersion students it is a thread that runs through the handbook. It is important that parents understand that when choosing a French immersion education for their Anglophone children they are not sacrificing any abilities or learning opportunities for their children. Parents need to also understand that there are some challenges that learning in a second language presents at certain times in their children education. As well, they need to know that these challenges are not insurmountable but are overcome, but do take some time.

Overall, the research indicates that French immersion students are not disadvantaged academically by learning in a second language. Although there are French immersion students with learning difficulties and may need interventions to help with their progress. Parents of these students may not be willing to put them in the program or to have them stay with the program. Having to speak with parents about whether the French immersion program is the right choice for their children is sometimes not easy. With this in mind I have created a section in the handbook related to the process that is used at the school level



when a child is struggling. I wanted to make it clear to parents that there are many different options that the school is able to use before recommending a change to an English program. It is encouraging for these parents to know that there is research that indicates that leaving the program is not the only option. It is also important to clarify to the parents that we at École Mountainview believe that when looking at the options for a child who is struggling it is what benefits the child, not the parents or the school, that is the priority.

Genesee (2007) reviewed questions surrounding the suitability of French immersion for students who were at risk for academic difficulties. He found that students with learning difficulties did not need to be moved from the French immersion program to an English program as they would continue to have the same difficulties. He also found contradicting studies about students who move from the French immersion program and the possible negative results. This report also pointed out the lack of information available on the use of interventions on at-risk students in the French immersion program.

As mentioned in Genesee's (2007) study, there are contradicting studies surrounding the removal of students from FI programs. Trites (1976) conducted research on students in early French immersion who were struggling academically. In testing these students he concluded that they had a "specific maturational lag" (Trites, 1976, p.200) which made learning in a second language difficult. He contended that students who are experiencing difficulty in French immersion should be placed into an English program. Furthermore, Trites maintained that students should be screened before entering the French immersion program and those with a possible learning disability should be directed towards an English program.

Conversely, in Bruck's (1978) study conducted on students in early French immersion, she argued that it did not make sense to remove learning disabled students from the French immersion program. She concluded that these students would continue to achieve at the same rate as they would in an English program. In keeping these students in the French immersion program and providing them with the appropriate assistance their academic achievement will not be negatively affected. In fact, she argued that the added piece is that they will also have developed a fluency in French that they would not achieve in a core French model.

The research on whether learning disabled students should continue on in a French immersion program is conflicting. There have also been questions about the data collected from Trites' (1976) study by Cummins (1979). Cummins re-evaluated Trites' data and argued that it actually supports the opposite conclusion. In Cummins' review of Trites' findings, he argued that the conclusion that students would achieve better in an English program is the opposite of what happened to some of the students. Interestingly, some of the French immersion students who transferred into an English program actually made poorer progress. As well, the concept of a specific maturational lag negatively affecting the learning of a second language has been questioned. In a reanalysis of the research done by Trites, Cummins argued that there is no evidence of the connection between this maturational lag and learning disabilities in French immersion students. Cummins stated that if a student has learning difficulties these difficulties will be cross-lingual.

For parents of French immersion students this research is important. This information can help parents understand that their children will be able to learn and achieve in all areas even though the language of instruction is French. With the research indicating



the cognitive benefits of learning a second language parents can understand the advantages of learning in French. For parents of children who may have learning difficulties giving them options for their children based in solid research is empowering.

#### Parental involvement and Student Achievement

There is a plethora of research on parent involvement and its effect on student achievement. However, in sifting through the research there are few, if any direct studies of families of French immersion students. The studies, reviews, and articles tend to focus more on the type of parent involvement and how it effects the general achievement of the students. Nevertheless, this research is solid and applicable to my project.

Epstein (2005) is one of the leaders in the field of parent involvement. She is the founder and director of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. She has led over 30 years of research into engaging not only families but communities in schools and education. Through the NNPS, Epstein has created opportunities to investigate these partnerships. Epstein (2005) summarized research conducted with these schools over the past five years. The studies reviewed supported the position that parent involvement positively effects student achievement. Included in this review are elements that help to create effective family-school partnerships. As well, Epstein (1995) has created a framework for parent involvement with explanations, practices, challenges, and results for parents, students, and teachers. It is this framework that I will consult as I progress from simply giving out the parent handbook to using it in a more directed way with workshops on important topics.

Burke and Hara (1998) conducted a study involving parents of third grade students in a large intercity school. They used Epstein's framework to construct a parent involvement

program tailored to the school's needs. The program included parent activities, programs, and workshops. They posited that based on the current research the involvement of parents would improve the students' achievement. The implementation of the parent involvement program with these parents was deliberate and well thought out taking into consideration the continuity factor. Burke and Hara found that parent involvement had a distinctly positive effect on the students' achievement. They also reported parents' renewed interest in learning and an appreciation of teachers, as well as a positive effect on students' attitudes toward learning and their teachers.

Redding, Langdon, Meyer, and Sheley (2004) focused on high poverty schools to ascertain if the research held out for these students as well. A list of parent involvement strategies was created for 129 elementary schools. Redding et al. found that the students of families who were involved with the plan improved in their academic achievement scores as compared to control groups. This study demonstrated that it is not only middle to high socio-economic families that benefit from parent involvement.

Jeynes (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of the effect of parents' involvement on students' achievement. In examining 77 research studies, Jeynes determined that students had higher achievement if their parents were actively involved in their children's education and that the more involved parents were the higher the achievement of the students. This theory of parental involvement held across grade levels and socio-economic status. Having parents on board with learning positively impacts children's learning.

In documents by Cotton and Wikelund (1989) and Hendersen and Mapp (2002) there is relevant information on parent involvement. Cotton and Wikelund conducted a review of 41 different documents pertaining to the connection of parent involvement to student

achievement. They listed key studies and the basic findings. Through their review of these studies, Cotton and Wiklund determined that parent involvement positively effects students' achievement as well as the students' attitudes towards school and learning. Hendersen and Mapp conducted a comprehensive synthesis of research studies focused on the influence of parental and community involvement on student achievement. The authors reviewed 80 studies and literature reviews. They searched major databases for studies and reviews with sound methodologies and consistent results. Throughout the synthesis Hendersen and Mapp established that parental involvement impacts student achievement in a positive way. This document also looked at connecting communities to schools as well as recommendations on how to involve families and communities in schools.

In a paper examining the French immersion programs in Canada, Cummins (1998) discussed the interdependence principle between minority and majority languages. Cummins (1979) also formally discussed this principle in an article on bilingual children and the linguistic interdependence. Simply stated the interdependence principle posited that the skills learned in a second language contribute to further developing the skills in the majority language. Cummins (1979) also argued that students who are struggling to learn in early French immersion could be supported academically in their majority language and then these skills could be transferred to the minority language. This interdependency between languages supports the idea that there is a cross-transference of literacy skills from one language to another.

In a longitudinal study by Comeau, Cormier, Grandmaison, and Lacroix (1999), the cross-transference of phonological awareness and word decoding between English and French was examined. In this study Comeau et al. looked at French immersion students in

New Brunswick. When the students were tested in both French and English the tests focused on phonological processing and word decoding. Comeau et al. compared the results from these test to see if they were significantly similar for both languages. The results showed a strong relation between the phonological awareness and decoding skills from the students' mother tongue to the second language. Thus, these results supported the hypothesis of cross-transference between the languages.

In another study of French immersion students; MacCoubrey, Wade-Woolley, Klinger, and Kirby (2004) examined methods of identifying at-risk readers in a second language. MacCoubrey et al. researched the use of an early identification method in the students' first language-English, to predict the students' reading achievement in both English and French. The students were tested three times over a one year period and the results of the various tests were analyzed using a predictive discriminant analysis to classify the students. MacCoubrey et al. concluded that use of an early identification method in English was able to predict students who were at-risk readers in both English and French. These findings support the theory that there is a cross-lingual transference between English and French.

#### French immersion Parents

Although the national French immersion program and its students have been heavily researched, any examination of French immersion parents is almost nonexistent. There is a report that focuses on homework that the National Canadian Parents for French organization have made available. This report is a needs analysis conducted by Hart, Lapkin, Mison, and Arnott (2010). The analysis used parent and teacher surveys to gather data. In completing this report the researchers also did a thorough review of current literature. Included in the

search was information on French immersion parents. The researchers found little research on French immersion parents and this lack of information is stated throughout the report.

Most research studies center on schools and families in the United States and lack a Canadian viewpoint. Pushor (2007) concurred with these findings. Pushor's focus was on parent engagement and she noted a lack of studies situated in Canada as well as the missing voices of parents in the research. Her paper is interesting in that it makes a distinction between parent involvement and parent engagement. Pushor asserted that with parent involvement the parents play a role that the school and educational experts have pre-determined and with parent engagement the parents' knowledge and expertise is accessed and their voices are heard. With parent engagement, the school and families are "acting in reciprocity" (Pushor, 2007, p. 9). This study is important to my research in that as I construct the parent handbook I want to note ways of engaging parents beyond just the handbook. The handbook is an in depth project for the families of my school but I do not want to stop there. After reading the research on parent involvement and its positive effect on parents and student achievement I want to go from parent involvement to parent engagement.

### Handbooks

Many French Immersion handbooks are general school handbooks with information about staff, policies, and codes of conduct. The most focused piece in these handbooks has been an explanation of the French immersion program at a specific school. They do not contain specific information for French immersion parents on how to help their children, websites to access, or what to do if there is a learning concern. The Department of Education in Nova Scotia website contained some basic information for parents as well as

French immersion sections from other schools and school districts across Canada. In the search for more extensive examples of parent handbooks, I have found five with ample information for parents whose children are attending the French immersion program; one from Vernon, BC; one from the Catholic school board in Calgary; one from Education Alberta; one from Saskatchewan; and one from Ontario.

The parent handbook from the Calgary Catholic School District is a 12 page pamphlet with five sections of information. It is well structured with a table of contents, it uses familiar language, and it has adequate information relating to the available French immersion programs. There is use of a question and answer format throughout each section. The font size is small and may pose a problem for some people to read. The handbook begins with a description of what French immersion is and then goes into the different types of programs available at various schools - early French immersion, late immersion, and an extended French program. There is a demographic listing of these schools. Also included in the handbook are sections on the benefits of learning a second language, deciding to enroll in the French immersion program, and frequently asked questions. In the FAQ section the concerns around homework, parent involvement in their child's education, French resources, and the curriculum are addressed.

The parent handbook from School District 22; Vernon, BC is a six-page document. It gives details about the French immersion program and the students involved in it, the academic achievement of these students, the parents' roles and how to support their child's education, and the world beyond the French immersion program. In the beginning it uses a question and answer format then switches to headings and paragraphs. The language used is familiar and accessible to parents. Although the handbook flows well from topic to topic

there is no table of contents to refer to. This may make it difficult for parents to find the information they are looking for. The section on parent involvement has pertinent information for parents of French immersion students and how to support their children. There is no reference to parent resources except for a mention of articles from Canadian Parents for French.

The parent handbook from Saskatchewan Education (2000) is a lengthy document with over 30 pages of information. This handbook has a table of contents and is divided into four main sections. There is a section with a general description of the French immersion program, a section with information on subject areas, and two sections on parent resources. This handbook generally uses a question and answer format, in easy to understand language. However, the use of clipart, font changes, and text boxes may make it visually too busy for some readers. Within the section on the French immersion program there is specific information on the program, the goals and guidelines, as well as the benefits of second language learning. The sections on the kindergarten program and language arts are specifically designed to answer questions about how the child learns in a second language, how to support this learning at home, and the development of second language learning. The handbook then goes into specific subject areas. This information is general in nature and could be for parents of children in an English classroom. The parent resource section has listed a resource center that is available to parents online with many different types of resources. As well, there is a listing of some other print documents that are available in French.

The parent handbook from the Central Ontario East Consultants' Association is another lengthy document containing pertinent information for parents. There is a table of

contents allowing for ease of finding the information needed. There is a full description of the French immersion program including the benefits of second language learning. Also there is a section of questions that parents may have with factual and easy to read answers. The handbook addresses the concern of homework and has a basic pronunciation guide to help parents. The rest of the handbook contains tables with resources for parents-websites, reading material, grammar books, TV and radio programs, software, French camps and exchanges. These tables include titles, a short description if needed, and the appropriate age level.

The parent handbook from Alberta Education (2011) is the most comprehensive document. It contains over 70 pages of information specifically designed for parents of French immersion students. It is well structured and supported with relevant research. Unlike the other handbooks, it is available in a digital copy with the various web links connecting to other sources for parents. The each section of the handbook is subdivided into several related sections with a *more information* subsection at the end of each. The language used in the document is not necessarily easily accessible to all parents. They may simply be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information. The types of French immersion programs available in Alberta are described as well as the benefits to second language learning. There is a well written section on how the students learn through a second language as well as sections on reading and writing. Throughout the handbook there are specific resources for parents to access whether through websites, booklists, or parent organizations.

The five chosen handbooks were used as research material in sourcing out areas that are important to include in my own school handbook. The handbooks were analyzed and



compared for reoccurring themes. They provided solid areas that either were substantiated with research or were areas that I personally felt were compelling enough to include. Overall I was looking for general information, organizational formats, and unknown but important information to include in my handbook. These handbooks provided adequate research material to use in the content analysis. From this I could tailor my school handbook and include pertinent information related to our school, our beliefs, and our processes.

This parent handbook was created to go beyond a school policy book. It is meant as a guide to help our parents understand about the French immersion education system in Terrace, to give parents some simple strategies to help them become more involved with their children's learning, and ways to seek help if needed while their children are in our school. The overall feeling that I have received from parents is that they ultimately want to be involved in their children's learning and this handbook is a first step to will help them achieve this desire.

### Conclusion

In summary, the research demonstrates that learning in a second language does not have a negative effect on academic progress; in fact French immersion students achieve comparable academic results to their English peers. The research also indicates that French immersion students have certain cognitive benefits from learning in a second language. This research on the scholastic achievement of French immersion students and the cognitive benefits of second language learning can reassure parents that they are making a positive choice for their children when putting them in the French immersion program. The many studies on the positive connection between students' achievement and parental involvement

support the importance of this handbook. Parents who are involved in their children's education feel connected to their children and to their children's school. This parental support helps to propel these children to excel in their academic endeavours; parents of French immersion students are capable of doing this as well as English parents. Parents can trust in the research which confirms that skills and strategies are transferred between languages and can support their children's education at home. The five French immersion parent handbooks will serve as frameworks and documents for the content analysis. The research and handbooks serve as important scaffold for the parental handbook for the parents at my school.

### CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As I stated in Chapter 1, I am a principal in a French immersion school. I have been involved in the French immersion program for over 20 years. In the past five years, I have taken on the role of administrator of my present school. I bring to this project different aspects of awareness; as a teacher, as an administrator, and finally as a French immersion parent. I have spoken with several parents and families over the years about the program and ways to support their children and have answered many questions as well. From these interactions I have realized that our parents are generally interested in what their children are learning and are willing participants in this learning; however, they are unsure of how this learning is supposed to unfold since the language can be a barrier.

As the administrator of the school, I feel that one of my roles is to encourage our parents in supporting their children but, in the past, the only way this support was happening was through school newsletters or our school website and through conversations which meant that I was not reaching all of our parents. Newsletters sometimes do not make it home or parents may not access the school website. As well, with most of our parents working during the day the chance for those important conversations has diminished. I have also come to realize that some of the teachers in the school are very capable in speaking with parents about activities to do at home to support their children and some are still learning this skill; therefore, I felt the necessity to create a parent handbook.

This handbook gives parents a concrete guide to help them in their quest to involve themselves in their children's learning. Parents want to be involved in their children's education without adversely affecting what their children are doing in French; this handbook will have concrete ways to do this, as well as assurances that what they are doing at home

will not adversely affect their children's learning. This handbook is founded in research on second language learning and language transference which will guide parents in choosing strategies and activities to work with their children at home both in French and in English. This research also assures parents that when they work with their children at home in English, these skills or strategies are then used by their children when they are at school learning in French. For the most part the parents at my school are Anglophone and rarely use or access French; therefore, this handbook not only has information on how to assist their children, but lists of resources, websites, and learning aids that may be needed in the future. It is a straightforward resource that my parents can use throughout their children's education.

### The Project

I conducted this project as a content analysis study. Since this project was to create a handbook for the parents of my school, I have analyzed the various parent handbooks I have collected and reviewed the literature on the types of parent involvement which affect positively student achievement. In conducting my research on French immersion, I was able to find fact sheets that schools or school districts have distributed to their parents. The information contained in these documents is generally in a question and answer format and centered on questions parents may have about French immersion. I have chosen not to include these fact sheets in my research as they did not contain a substantial amount of information to analyze.

In content analysis, text is examined to find common trends, word usages, or themes. The presence of the various themes in the text is identified, quantified, and then inferences are drawn from this. For the purpose of this research project I have based my methodology

on Altheide's definition of content analysis, "to capture the meanings, emphasis, and themes of messages and to understand the organization and process of how they are presented" (Altheide, 1996, p. 33). Content analysis is a flexible research method that I used to reduce the texts that I have to their essential themes. I have looked for common trends, words, strategies, and patterns in the handbooks I have selected and connected these to my research question: What ideas, strategies, and information should be included in a parent handbook for French immersion parents?

In proposing content analysis for my research method, I saw two important processes involved in utilizing this technique. First, there was the categorization of the data which can be conducted either before analysis or during. It also can be based solely on the examination of the data or it can be grounded in research theory before the data is even looked at. The categorization may look at common themes or concepts, particular phrases, or basic word frequency. Which categories are used will depend on the texts and the answers that the researcher is looking to find. The other process involved in content analysis is using these categories to connect to the research question or questions. The information gathered through categorization is then used to infer answers to the research question. This process involves not only the data but also the experiences and the knowledge of the researcher. I have mentioned that this method is flexible. Herein I mean that as the texts are analyzed, the question or questions with which I have originally started may need to be refined or even redefined. The method is also flexible in the selection of categories for coding of the text. As I read these handbooks over the past several months, I began with a general idea of the categories to look for but this changed as I went further into the analysis.

Content analysis focuses on the messages which are presented through written documents. These messages carry an impact on the reader (Krippendorff, 2013; Neuendorf, 2002; Weber, 1990). My focus has been on conceptual analysis as I was particularly interested in the different ideas, strategies, and information which are contained within the parent handbooks. I did not do a word-by-word analysis of the handbooks as that would have been too cumbersome and would not have given me the evidence that I was looking for to use in creating my own parent handbook. Instead, I determined to use broad themes that were evident in the exemplars. According to Krippendorff content analysis is “an unobtrusive technique that allows researchers to analyze relatively unstructured data in view of the meanings, symbolic qualities, and expressive contents they have and of the communicative roles they play in the lives of the data’s sources” (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 49). I looked for information that was important to convey to French immersion parents who want to assist their children in their learning. Content analysis was the research method that allowed me to do this and use this research to create my own parent handbook.

I did not interview parents directly about what information they would like to see in a handbook as this was outside the scope of the content analysis of the handbooks. Therefore, I based my research on the handbooks I collected. In analyzing these existing handbooks, I created a framework to use in creating my own handbook. In the search for the handbooks, I looked at and rejected single page, pamphlet-style parent handouts as these did not contain enough information to make an analysis worthwhile. It was a struggle to find parent handbooks which contain enough in-depth information to make a content analysis meaningful. I collected, what I determined to be, five reasonable examples of parent handbooks to examine through content analysis. Reasonable in the fact that the information



contained within them was more than an explanation of French immersion and where to find the appropriate schools. There was substance to the information in the handbooks and the audience was obviously French immersion parents. Since I used text as the main research piece, I determined that it was important to use a method that works with the examining of text for common information. Content analysis connected well with this research project as it focuses on analyzing text.

I purposefully gathered the French immersion parent handbooks which I believed contained important concepts, strategies, and general information which is in keeping with the manner in which samples are collected for content analysis. Over the course of many months I searched for handbooks that could serve as guiding models for the one I created. In keeping with the importance of how connecting the content analysis to a research question focuses the purpose of the analysis, (Krippendorff, 2013), my own research question helped drive my search and focused me on looking for examples of handbooks that contain strategies, information, and ideas. Over the course of the project, no other suitable examples of parent handbooks were found.

### Data Analysis

The five handbooks that I used in the analysis were from different school districts as well as different provinces. Two of the handbooks were from Alberta, one from Ontario, one from Saskatchewan, and one from British Columbia. To help me with the basic structure of the handbooks I analyzed each from a structural point of view. I created a short analysis sheet which categorized each handbook by the number of pages, the overall structure-table of contents, titles of each section, if it contained graphics or not, and if it was available in a digital form, online, or in a hardcopy. This categorization assisted with the

format of the handbook I created as well as being a quick overview of each handbook. This summary, then lead me to create a spreadsheet which contained more classifications. This spreadsheet allowed me to view easily different characteristics of the handbooks and to compare each one before I went into the actual coding of them.

Organizing the handbooks in these formats facilitated the coding analysis which came next. To begin this process I returned to the initial research question and the preliminary list of categories or themes and diligently went through each handbook. In doing so I was attempting to “construct a world in which the texts make sense and can answer the analyst’s research questions”, (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 30). I began this process by hand coding the following broad themes: benefits of second language learning, learning strategies, homework, parent support, learning difficulties, parent resources, early French immersion, and English language learning.

Initially, I chose to code the themes and the text connected to it wherever they were mentioned in the handbooks. This led to large units of text being coded so that I would not miss important pieces of data. As a neophyte to content analysis I did not want to overlook data and in using a thematic approach to the analysis I was finding abundant information but which also tended to be overly general. As well, in thoroughly examining each handbook I soon realized that the original list of themes was too narrow and there were other important themes which I found occurring in the handbooks. In conducting the content analysis it necessitated finding data that was “meaningful and informative” (Krippendorff, 2013) and which connected to my research question. Therefore, I needed to go through the handbooks to code for these new themes as well as refine and recode what was contained in already established themes.



As I continued with the analysis I added important themes that I uncovered in the handbooks. As I coded for the description of the French immersion program, I determined that goals of the program were included in the handbooks. Originally, I did not select this to code for but realized that almost all the handbooks contain this unit of data and that it is connected to my research question, so I coded for it. This happened with other units of information as well. In reflecting on the theme of teaching strategies, I realized that parents may want to know more about the learning process as well. This theme was evident in the handbooks I was analyzing; therefore I coded it for analysis. Another theme which began emerging over the coding process was suitability for the French immersion program. This connected to my research question and is a question that parents ask when enrolling their children in the program, thus it was important to include it.

In analyzing the handbooks over the course of the project, the final list of themes for which I coded included benefits of second language learning, English language achievement, goals of the French immersion program, homework help, learning disabilities, learning process, non-French speaking parents, parent supporting learning, program description, resources for parents, suitability for the French immersion program, and teaching strategies. Through further analysis, I determined that several of these themes needed to be predominantly included in my handbook and others such as non-French speaking parents and suitability for the French immersion program needed a less dominant inclusion. This decision was based on the frequency that the themes occurred in the handbooks as well as how many of the handbooks the themes occurred in.

Throughout continued analysis, I determined that some of the themes were so dense that it was important to create subcategories for these particular themes as it simplified the

analysis. For the theme of the benefits of second language learning there were different benefits mentioned in the various handbooks. I wanted to see if similar advantages were in each of the handbooks or if there was only a general “it is beneficial to learn in a second language” statement. Therefore, I returned to the benefits of second language learning data to recode. In doing so I found in the handbooks there were groupings of different benefits of learning a second language such as cognitive skills, communicating, enhanced first language skills, potential work possibilities, and cultural awareness. Since these benefits connect with the research on second language learning, I felt it was important to include these in the analysis. Also, I determined the importance of this data both by its occurrence in most of the handbooks and its importance from a parents’ perspective.

Another theme that required further analysis was the parent supporting learning. As I went through the handbooks I determined that there were ways that parents generally supported their children’s learning. Some of these ways were targeted to parents whose children were in a French immersion environment and some of the ways were general strategies for parents with children in school. Since my focus for the handbook was on specific strategies for French immersion parents I felt that subdividing this theme was important and assisted me in identifying strategies that I potentially wanted to include in my handbook.

One of the purposes behind creating this handbook was to offer to parents a document which not only had ways to support their children, but also a listing of resources that they could access for various reasons. I found it surprising that the sample handbooks I had did not contain much in the way of parent resources. Although most of the handbooks did not develop this idea significantly, the amount of resources contained in one of the

handbooks necessitated subdividing this theme into specific resources. Thus, I went back through the parental resource sections in each handbook and reanalyzed them according to new, particular categories-basic language information, camps/exchanges, Canadian Parents for French, computer software, music, reading material, reference materials, resource centers, TV shows, and websites.

When I first began the analysis, I only had eight themes that I used to code the handbooks. As I continued with the analysis and expanding the number of themes that the handbooks contained I realized that hand coding was becoming cumbersome and the results were becoming difficult to organize. At this point I decided to use the NVivo 10 program to facilitate the organizing of the project as well as being able to quickly view the themes I was coding. Therefore I took my handbooks and put them into NVivo 10 and created nodes for the themes that I already had hand coded. Each of these themes was coded into NVivo10.

Through the use of this software I was able to print certain nodes so that I could then reanalyze to determine if the units of information needed to be further separated into meaningful pieces. Through the use of the software I focused on a node or theme without the whole document interfering with the analysis. It streamlined the organization of the content analysis. As well, it tracked the various nodes and provided important information that I could then use to base my decisions on. On the nodes page of the NVivo 10 program I could quickly see how many of the handbooks contained the various nodes that I coded for as well as how many times the nodes were referenced. In using the NVivo 10 software it simplified the research and made the analysis somewhat less complicated.

Interestingly when doing the analysis it became apparent that certain themes were important and included in all of the handbooks and that certain themes were not. My

decisions as to the information that I felt the most pertinent were based on looking at the content analysis as well as trusting my experience with parents and in the French immersion program. In reviewing the content analysis I uncovered important units of information to include in my handbook. The analysis pointed me in the direction of including goals of the French immersion program as well as a detailed description of the program. Initially I did not include this, naively thinking that the parents who enroll their children in the program have already done this research. This trusting thinking may have closed the door to the program to some families who are not knowledgeable about the program beyond that it is taught in French.

In conducting the research on the sample handbooks, I have taken into account what the content analysis put forth as important themes as well as utilizing my awareness and knowledge as a French immersion educator and parent. I used my experience to review what the content analysis has indicated as important pieces for my school handbook and to connect this to my research question. It is important to state that I took into consideration the audience for this handbook: parents. The content analysis helped me to determine meaningful, relevant, and helpful data to use in constructing this handbook. The analysis also allowed me to validate that the data I chose to use reflected the needs of the handbooks' audience as the texts that were used for the analysis had parents as their context. As Krippendorff (2013) states "content analysts draw specific inferences from a body of texts to their chosen context" (p. 30).

Furthermore, this research experience has validated what I believed is important information for parents of my school community. My experience as an educator, an administrator, and a parent in the French immersion program; the data analysis of various



Table 1

*Table of Themes (in boldface) from Content Analysis with Examples from Handbooks*

Name	Example from handbooks	Sources	References
<b>Benefits of L2</b>	increases their ability to understand themselves	5	17
3rd-4th language learning	making learning a third or fourth language easier	2	3
Cognitive skills	developing creative and critical thinking skills	4	10
Communicating in a 2nd language	an opportunity to become functionally bilingual	4	5
Culture-history	the ability to respect and understand other cultures	4	5
Enhanced 1st language skills	enhance understanding and use of first language	4	5
Language transference	these skills and this knowledge are easily transferable to the second language	1	1
Work related	increase post-secondary educational and employment opportunities	5	10
<b>English Language Achievement</b>	research has not revealed any negative impacts on the English language skills	5	12
<b>Goals of FI program</b>	able and willing to participate easily in conversations	5	31
<b>Homework Help</b>	parents can help with any concept regardless of the language	5	36
<b>Learning Disabilities</b>	difficulty in a subject area-the confusion lies with the concept, not the language	4	16
<b>Learning process</b>	listen for a long time before speaking on their own	2	29
<b>Non-French speaking parents</b>	it is not expected that parents speak French	3	4
<b>Parent supporting learning</b>	as with any educational program, parental involvement is important	5	60
Specific to FI program	it is important to do things with your child in English as everything will be in French at school	5	49
<b>Program Description</b>	the French language is the medium of instruction	5	26
<b>Resources for Parents</b>	parents have access to information through books, pamphlets, speakers, workshops, the media, and the internet	3	18
Basic Language Information	French pronunciation guide for parents	3	8
Camps-Exchanges-Work Experience	French camps through recreation departments	2	4
Canadian Parents for French	CPF-www.cpf.ca-an association of parents	5	15
Computer Software	numerous software programs-Lapin Malin, Logimots	1	2
Music	Charlotte Diamond, Max Maxwell, Suzanne Pinel	1	1
Reading Material	Coulicou, Hibou, Scholastic,	1	4
Reference Materials	Dictionnaire-Larousse, Le Visuel, Le petit robert	2	7
Resource Center	Le Lien-www.cforp.on.ca	2	2
TV shows	check local listings for French channels	1	1
Websites	<a href="http://www.radio-canada.ca">www.radio-canada.ca</a>	3	14
<b>Suitability for FI program</b>	enthusiastic about learning	4	11
Indicators of unsuitability	lack of motivation for learning in French	3	5
<b>Teaching Strategies</b>	developing French oral language competency	4	25

parent handbooks; and the communication with French immersion parents have worked together to provide me with the appropriate information needed for my parent handbook.

### The Handbook

The handbook was created based on the content analysis of other exemplars as well as the connection to the theoretical background information. In the literature review section, I researched the achievement of French immersion students, second language learning, and learning disabilities in French immersion students so that including this in the handbook reflected grounding in research not only opinion. The research on parent involvement directed me on its positive impact on student achievement so that parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's academic life. In all; the combination of content analysis, with the research theory, and with my own experience, worked to assist me in creation of a comprehensive parent handbook.

The handbook for the parents at École Mountainview is written in easy-to-understand language so that it will be accessible to all of our parents. I have attempted to make it practical as well as factual. The initial proposal outline is close to the finished project except that the final three chapters have been switched around so that ways to incorporate the use of French at home and the parental resources are together and the learning difficulty chapter is following the chapter on reading and writing. I have researched the various websites to confirm that they are up to date and working. This will be an area which will need monitoring and as information changes, the handbook will need to be updated.

In creating this handbook, I have taken into consideration the concerns of the parents at my school. I have aspired to create a handbook that is not overwhelming but

comprehensive; that in the end, it will be a practical guide for our parents containing useful strategies and information based in research.

### Conclusion

The main research element of this project was a content analysis of French immersion parent handbooks. This content analysis was conducted to answer the research question: What ideas, strategies, and information should be included in a parent handbook for French immersion parents? There were abundant data from the five handbooks used in the analysis to answer this question. The information gathered from the analysis went into the development of the final parent handbook. The data analysis also assisted in determining areas that I initially overlooked including in my parent handbook. The theoretical background on French immersion, second language learning, and parent involvement gave a scaffold for the handbook to rest on and its importance is reflected in the finished handbook.

## CHAPTER 4: FRENCH IMMERSION PARENT HANDBOOK

This handbook was created to assist the parents of French immersion students and to encourage their involvement in their children's learning. The handbook contains many ways to engage parents in their children's learning without having to speak French. The structure is thematic and begins with information on the French immersion program from kindergarten through to graduation. There is research based information on second language learning and the cross transference of language skills. It also provides parents with information on ways to support their children's learning, ways to help with homework, as well as, fun activities to involve parents in everyday learning. There is a detailed section on reading and writing and a section on learning difficulties. The final sections are filled with reference and resource information for parents. Since the parents at my school are from various educational and socio-economic backgrounds, the handbook is written in language that is uncomplicated and easy to read.

The goal of this project and this handbook is two-fold: to encourage parents' commitment to learning, as well as, giving parents specific and simple ways to involve themselves in their children's learning. When parents are given the opportunity and the skills to work with their children, the children will benefit. With the information contained within it, this handbook will be beneficial to both parents and their children.



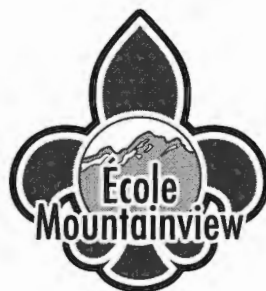


**École Mountainview**  
**Parent Handbook**

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**Bienvenue ~ Welcome to École Mountainview.**

You have made the choice to educate your child in a French immersion school but may have some questions about what that means beyond filling out the registration form. This handbook was created to help guide the parents of students at École Mountainview. It touches on topics that parents have had questions about over the many years I have been involved in the French immersion program. If you have a question about your child or your child's educational progress that this guide does not address, please speak with the classroom teacher.

In 2009 the French immersion program went from a dual track system to a single track system. This means that our school is exclusively a French immersion school with the language most frequently heard and used in our building being French. In 2010 we moved into our new school building- École Mountainview - where the program has continued to flourish. I hope that this handbook will be able to answer some questions that you may have about the French immersion program at École Mountainview.

## **An overview of the program and goals**

### **The French immersion program**

Various forms of French immersion programs have existed in Canada over the past 40 years. In Terrace, BC the program has been available to students since 1981. The basic characteristics of a French immersion program in British Columbia are:

- Children coming into the program usually do not speak French nor do they need to be able to
- All subjects are taught in French except English later on
- French is the language of communication and instruction
- The prescribed learning outcomes for BC schools are followed and are available in French
- English is introduced as a subject usually in grade four

### **École Mountainview: Ici on apprend en français**

École Mountainview is a public early French immersion school open to all children; there are no fees or special requirements. Families do not need to be able to speak, read, or understand French nor do families need to have any French background. Children can be enrolled into the program either in kindergarten or grade one. Currently in the school we have classes of students from kindergarten to grade six. Like all public schools we follow the prescribed curriculums for students from the Ministry of Education of British Columbia. The most important difference for our students is the language of instruction and communication: French. The teachers instruct in French, the staff converse in French, the announcements from the office are in French, and the books in the classrooms and library are in French. At École Mountainview we take pride in learning, speaking, and living in the French language therefore we are constantly promoting the use of French with our students.

No, we did not forget that the parents of our students may not be able to converse or read in French. Therefore, all communications with parents will be in English. Our newsletters and parent notices are in English as well as our website. Although from time to time there will be French expressions used that parents will soon learn to recognize. And if not, you can ask your child and they can then become a teacher! If you need to speak with

your child's teacher please come in and do so. All of our teachers are able to speak in English as well as French.

As well, we realize that this may be the first experience with the French language that most of the students coming into our school will have. We encourage the students to be excited about learning in a different language. We encourage them to speak with each other in French as well as with our staff. There is positive reinforcement of our students' French language use and gentle correcting when needed. Our teachers and support staff are the best sources of the French language in the school and they keep in mind that they are the role models for our students and demonstrate their own interest in learning and using the French language. We have a focus on oral language within our school-encouraging everyone to speak in French so that learning, teaching, and socializing in a French environment becomes natural to all.

### The structure of the program

In the early French immersion program the language of instruction is French for all subjects. This means that the students will be learning not only to speak, read, and write in French but also concepts from math, science, social studies, physical education, and art in French. French is not taught separately but is the method of instruction for the students. English is not introduced as a subject until grade 4 and should take up no more than 20% of the weekly class time. When students begin learning English it is not unusual for them to struggle. Research has shown that there is an initial lag for early French immersion students in English especially with spelling and grammar but within a year or two most of the students will be at grade level with their English peers. This initial lag may be concerning for you as parents. Remember the students are used to learning, speaking, reading, writing in French but not in English. Most students take some time to adjust to learning about the English language but given time and good instruction in English they will achieve grade level expectations.

### Learning in a second language

Our students come to us without or with very little French language. We understand this and our classroom programs are structured to take this into account. When students walk into our school they are brought into a French language environment. The teachers speak French, the principal speaks French, the announcements are in French, there are

French posters and student work with French words on the hallway walls, and the older students are speaking with each other in French-French is everywhere. When learning a second language students need to hear and listen to the language for quite a long time before beginning to speak it. With the school being a rich French language environment the students are being exposed to the language all the time.

In the beginning students will be speaking single words in French mixed with English, then small phrases, and eventually whole sentences in French. Similar to when they began speaking their first language, students will try to make meaningful connections to the French language such as saying *bonjour* (good day) when they see their teacher in the morning or *au revoir* (good bye) at the end of the day. The teachers speak with the students in French but respond to the students when they speak in English. The teacher will repeat what the student has said using the French words that the student needs. Our students are encouraged to speak in French and as their vocabulary increases they are encouraged to then use the words that they know. Do not worry if your child is not speaking French soon after beginning school. Each child is different but generally students begin using meaningful French words sometime during the kindergarten year.

### Our goals of the French immersion program

The French immersion program is an effective way to promote the learning of another language, having students proficient in speaking and learning in another language while achieving all the expected outcomes of the school curriculums. The program instills not only the love of learning but the love of learning in another language. It gives our students an extra layer of understanding beyond what they may have gotten in an English school. The goals that we have for the students in our program are:

- to be able to communicate in French both orally and in written form
- to have an appreciation of learning in a second language and its benefits
- to achieve or surpass all expected outcomes in all subject areas
- to continue on in the French immersion program and become functionally bilingual
- to have an awareness of the French heritage and culture of Canada
- to have more post-secondary and employment opportunities available



## The program beyond École Mountainview

Yes, the French immersion program does continue on after École Mountainview! The French immersion program is available to students at Skeena Middle School and Caledonia High School. Once at these schools the students will have some subjects that are taught in English and others that are taught in French. At Skeena the core subjects; language arts, science, math, and social studies are usually taught in French but the exploratory subjects – foods, metal work, art, computers, etc. – are generally taught in English. As students continue on to Caledonia the delivery of the French immersion courses may be traditional- in a classroom with a teacher or through non-traditional methods - video conference, online, or podcasts. Students who continue on to grade 12 in the French immersion program will graduate with a dual dogwood. This means that they have completed enough courses in French to receive both a Dogwood Diploma and a French Dogwood Diploma. The French Dogwood indicates a proficiency in the French language beyond taking a few French courses.

## **Benefits of learning a second language**

### The advantages of learning in a second language

As parents you have made the choice of enrolling your child into the French immersion program at École Mountainview. Parents choose this program for various reasons; they were French immersion graduates, they like the idea of their child learning a second language, their friends have recommended the school, or they know other children who have gone through the program and did well. We applaud your decision to join our school and to have your child learn in a second language. We would also like you to know some of the many advantages of learning in a second language.

When children learn in a second language their brains are used in different ways than if they were learning in their first language. Each day in the classroom children will be immersed in a language they initially do not know. They will be looking for clues to make connections between the French language that is being spoken to them and their understanding of what is being said. They almost seem to be in a constant state of “trying to figure it out”; always using their brains in potentially new and different ways. Don’t worry; eventually this state changes into learning through the language instead of simply learning the language. Of course there are always new concepts and new words to learn but their



brains are familiar with doing this and know of many ways to “figure it out”. Because of these brain “gymnastics” many of the benefits of second language learning have to do with a child’s cognitive abilities.

**Learning in a second language can:**

- develop more creative thinking strategies
- create a more flexible thinker
- enhance problem solving and reasoning strategies
- deepen listening skills
- strengthen first language abilities

**Second language abilities can:**

- allow children to interact with French music, media, art, and different people that they may not have been able to in their first language
- enhance the understanding of another culture which is part of Canada
- create more post-secondary opportunities
- create an advantage in the competitive job market

## **Supporting your child**

**But I don’t speak French, so how can I help?**

Over 90 % of our school families do not speak French so you are in the majority. We are a French immersion school and the teaching of the French language and using it as the medium of instruction is the responsibility of the school. We realize that most of our parents do not have French background and understand the limitations that this may put on you. We also understand it may make you uncertain as to how to help your child. Even when the homework is in French you can support your child in many ways throughout their education. This section of the handbook will give you some ways to prepare your child for entering into a French immersion school, how to support your child in English, and strategies to use when the homework is in French. It also answers the question many of our parents have about how helping in English can actually help your child in their French class.

## **Preparing your child for a French immersion school**

One of the best ways to prepare your child for their new journey into a French school is to do what all parents do before sending their young ones off to kindergarten-talk to them

about it. Get them excited about coming to school, as well as learning French. A positive attitude goes a long way in motivating children to learn. When you enroll your child into École Mountainview bring your child with you so he or she can see the school and maybe meet the principal. Helping familiarize your child with where he or she will be going in the fall is beneficial. If the principal is there when you enroll, ask for a tour of the school or if it is a nice day, play on the playground.

Many children are at different developmental levels when they come into kindergarten. Our teachers take the students from where they are at socially, emotionally, and intellectually and move them along towards positive goals. There is not a certain level that we expect our newest students to be at when they first come in our doors but helping them to become as independent as possible is an important goal for you as a parent. Exposing them to some French language is helpful but not necessary. It is better to read to them and with them, to colour inside or outside the lines, to cut paper so that holding scissors is not difficult, play games, run in the field, and enjoy your time with your child. If he or she is able to zip up his or her coat and tie his or her shoes, great; if not he or she will learn with the help of you and their teacher.

Making entry into kindergarten a positive experience is a motivating factor for your child's learning. At École Mountainview we strive to make every child feel valued and welcome as well as creating a positive French learning experience.

### How can I help my child when I do not speak French?

This is a question that many of our parents ask our staff each year. You know as a parent that your involvement in your child's education will have a positive effect on their learning. Students who have parents who support their learning, who check if they have homework, who talk to them about what they are learning in school, and who are generally engaged in their children's education are students whose academic achievement is positively affected. When you as a parent show your child that learning is important and that École Mountainview is a positive learning environment, your child will demonstrate a positive attitude about learning. And in actuality you do not need to be able to understand or speak French to do this. Coming up are some ways to do just that.

If I help my child in English, won't it negatively affect the learning in French?

It may sound odd but many parents think this to be true. Your child is learning not just to speak French but is learning through the French language. All the math concepts, science experiments, cultural information, gym games, and much more are taught using the French language. Parents may feel that they cannot or should not read to their child in English or count in English or play a word game in English as it may somehow have a negative effect on his or her child's French. Well, I am here to tell you that this will not happen and the knowledge is based in sound research.

French immersion programs have existed in Canada for over four decades and these programs have been heavily researched. There are several research studies (Cummins, 1979, 1998; Comeau, Cormier, Grandmaison, and Lacroix, 1999; MacCoubrey, Wade-Woolley, Klinger, and Kirby, 2004) which support the belief that skills learned in one language transfer to a second language. The skills these studies were specifically looking at were the transfer of literacy skills from one language to another. Simply put if I am taught the reading skill of how to sound out a word, I will be able to do this skill in French (the language I was taught in) as well as in English. This is because it is a skill or reading strategy that a person can use in most languages. The sounds a person uses may be different but the skill remains the same.

So when you read, in English, with your child the skills that you are teaching them-sounding out words or recognizing smaller words in bigger words-are ones that he or she will use when reading period, no matter what the language. As well, the skills your child is learning at school are skills that he or she will also use at home when reading whether in English or French. You will not damage the learning that your child has already accomplished by reading, by showing how to sound out words, or even by exposing your child to different types of books. Spending time with your child playing with language, reading, writing, or playing a math game only reinforces the learning being doing in school no matter what language you are using at home. So take the time and connect with your child; encourage curiosity, encourage a willingness to learn, or support various talents and show that learning is important no matter how you do it.

## Ways to encourage your child's learning beyond the classroom

One of the most important ways to support your child in the French immersion program is to be an involved parent. This does not mean that when they come home from French immersion school, English school is open. You do not need to make your child do drill and practice to help support learning. Most of the time, the everyday activities that you do with your child will encourage curiosity, will expose your child to new experiences, or will engage your child in learning. Some ways to stimulate your child's learning are:

- Talking with your child about their day-a good question to ask is around what your child found interesting about the day. This question will help to emphasize to your child that the world is an interesting place to be curious about and to pay attention to these happenings.
- Going for a walk around the neighbourhood or in the forest. Talking about what is happening in the environment, talk about connections to nature, or ways to help the environment.
- Going to the public library to find interesting books for both you and your child to read or to see if there are any fun programs to attend.
- Playing soccer, road hockey, basketball, hopscotch, tag, etc. with your child to encourage physical activity-a benefit to both you and your child.
- Depending on your child's writing abilities, let your child make the grocery list, chore lists, or notes for upcoming events.
- Playing a board game. This helps develop turn taking skills, strategic thinking, memory, math skills, or reading skills.
- Sharing a hobby that you enjoy with your child. Your child will make a different connection with you as you both share in an activity that makes you happy.
- Reading to and with your child is an important activity that encourages reading skills and the enjoyment of literature-and don't forget the funny voices.
- Ask your child's teacher what new concepts are being taught in class and look into projects that relate to the topic. It could be a fun science experiment, a journal to write, or talking to someone who works in the field of study. Make some home connections to your child's learning and there is potential for deeper learning of a concept.



This is not an exhaustive list. There are probably many other activities that you do with your child that encourage their love of learning as well. You as parents need to make a commitment to taking time to interact with your child on a daily basis. In reality, having parents who are connecting with their children, making time to do activities with them, and who believe in their children's capacity to learn are ultimately the best support for their children.

### Help, I cannot read the homework!

Yes, your child will be bringing home homework that is in French. You play a huge role in helping illustrate that the homework being brought home is important even if you cannot read it. Homework is given to students for specific purposes; to practice or review concepts, to complete work not finished during the school day, and to help establish good study habits that will serve your child in the future. Even in kindergarten students will bring home a weekly newsletter that not only has information for parents in it-what letter the students are working on, new vocabulary introduced, special events- but usually contains a little practice sheet. This could be the number of the day or letter of the week. Establishing a homework routine as early as kindergarten encourages students to develop good study habits.

There are ways that you can help with homework without having to know how French:

- Have a set time for working on homework-after school, after supper, etc.  
Keeping to a routine will assist your child in putting time aside for homework.
- Have a space that your child can work in that has little distractions and all the supplies that are needed to complete the work. It is not an effective use of time when your child takes 15 minutes of homework time searching for a calculator. Make sure everything is there and ready to be used.
- Help your child plan what will need to be done and when it will be done. If there is a long term project your child is working on, help to break it down into manageable steps so the work is not overwhelming. As some children are visual learners, having a posted schedule or calendar with assignment due dates on it may be helpful.

- Once students reach grade three at EMV they are given an agenda to keep track of their homework. Ask to see this important book. Review it with your child. It is a great tool for many children but they need to consistently use it or it becomes just another bunch of papers. Most of our teachers sign the agendas and use it as a tool to communicate with parents. If you are unsure of how your child's agenda is being used in class please contact your child's teacher.
- Your child may need support in organizing the work being done, the homework space, or the books borrowed from the library. Have a consistent place that all of these items are kept-by the bedroom door or by the front door to the house. If the items your child needs are routinely found in the same place it will avoid scrambling around in the morning looking for that permission slip or agenda to sign.

Remember consistency is key to developing good study habits. Your child will need your support to help see that homework is valuable to their education. Yes, there will be times that the homework schedule may need to change-special event, illness, hockey or basketball tournament-but remember to get it right back on track as soon as possible. Of course, all of this will take time and patience both on your and your child's part. Keep it up, it is worth it.

### Specific homework strategies

There will be times when your child will come home and say the dreaded words: "I don't understand what to do". You will take one look at the work and go "me either"! It is a common occurrence, especially as the concepts that your child is learning become more detailed. Usually around the grade two or three level your child will be able to explain in English what it is that is being taught and what is causing the learning hurdle. Once you have established what the difficulty is you can then help your child in English with it. Remember that the skills that you use with your child will transfer into the French language; the vocabulary may be different but the skill will remain. Addition in French or in English is the same mathematical function only the words are different.

Some ways to help with homework:

- Have your child explain the concept to you and what your child needs help with. You can then work on the concept in English. You need to remember that school

may have changed since you attended and there are different methods that teachers and children use to learn-reading is no longer only about sounding out a word but there are many different strategies to reading. Listen carefully to what your child is saying so that you do not create confusion with yet another way of doing the work. You never know, you may learn a new way to subtract.

- Showing your child how to use a dictionary or thesaurus to find out what those important words mean. Go through what is being asked and help to break it up into small manageable pieces.
- Encourage writing in French only; not first in English and then translating this into French. You can help with brainstorming ideas orally about the topic but once the writing begins it should be in French.
- Finding places to get useful information for research. There are many French websites that can be found if inputting the most suitable search words. You can assist your child with selecting these words and then your child can use them to do a search in French. This way you are helping find the information needed, as well as teaching a valuable skill.
- With math concepts sometimes students need extra practice with objects instead of just numbers. Some children prefer touching and counting before looking at the numbers on the paper. You can support this practice by having some type of counters around to work on math concepts-dried beans, buttons, lego cubes, etc. Also, it is helpful to make connections to the real world so that children see the practical side of the math. Like, carpenters use geometry to be able to build or that knowing how to add fractions is important when you are baking and maybe doubling the recipe.
- Have your child read to you in French. You do not necessarily need to know if all the words are being pronounced correctly. The fact that you are listening, encourages your child's reading. Then when the reading is done ask your child to tell you in English what the story was about-just the general plot, not a word for word translation. Your child will be encouraged by being the teacher instead of the student.

- La dictée: this generally is a spelling list in French. If you feel comfortable enough with your French pronunciation then please help your child with this. But, if this is something that you may struggle with here are some ways to help. Study buddies can test each other on the words. Have a classmate over for a “play and dictée” date or if not then they can test each other over the phone with you checking to make sure the spelling is right. If you have an older child in the French immersion program ask your older child to help with the dictée, it helps to show these children that their effort in learning in French does have some benefits. If all else fails there are a few website that will say the words if you type them into the text box. The voices can be somewhat mechanical but in a pinch it may work.

Homework is a fact of educational life. When your child is in French immersion do not feel that you cannot help with this. It may take a bit more time and ingenuity but as we say at EMV “ça vaut la peine”-it is worth it.

## **Reading and writing in French and English**

### **How your child will learn to read and write**

Many French immersion parents worry when their child is not reading or writing and some of the playmates who are in English schools have already begun to do so. Reading is a fundamental skill that we at École Mountainview believe is vital to learning in all areas. Each year we look at the programs, the strategies, the books, the evaluation tools we are using to make sure we are doing all that we can do to help our students become not simply good readers but students who enjoy reading in French. Writing follows close behind with its fundamental connection to achievement. When a child is learning in another language there is an expected delay in some areas. This is due to the fact that the children do not have the language capabilities to be able to read and write with understanding in the French language. The initial focus for our students is on vocabulary and oral language development. It is difficult to be able to read with understanding *Le chat est grand* when you do not yet know the word for cat or big.

### **The reading process**

To understand the process a bit better think of when your child first began to talk. Your child has been hearing language for many months and the first words are usually



connected to a person, *mama*, or a need, *baba* (bottle). After a few more months your child then moved on to saying two or three words. This continues; adding new words, speaking new words, listening to others speaking, correcting a word when not using the right one; for not just months but a few years until children are speaking in simple sentences, answering questions, and making connections to spoken language. This process continues on as children learn new ideas, talk with different people, and make more connections. When first in kindergarten your child is going through this process all over again. Children will need to repeatedly hear new words over months of school before being able to say it orally. There are so many new words in French that your child will be learning in the first few years of school that we initially focus on oral language then move into reading. Children need vocabulary to draw on when reading a book. If they do not have the French word for cat in their repertoire then when they see it in a book it is just an exercise of sounding out and not making a connection to understanding what they are reading.

When a child learns to read varies from child to child but generally between the ages of four and seven children develop pre-reading and reading skills:

- Substitute words in rhyming patterns
- Make a connection between the letters on the page and the words of the story
- Make connections between the letters and their sounds
- Realize that letters/words have meaning
- Begin to sound out words
- Begin to recognize words in different places: the word *chat* may be a spelling word and is also in the story they are reading
- Begin to read simple, repetitive books

For children in French immersion reading fluently and with understanding may not happen until the end of grade one or even into grade two. This is not cause to worry as the students need to practice with the language and need to continuously develop their vocabulary. If you have concerns about your child's reading abilities your child's teacher is the best source of information to discuss this with.

## Strategies for reading

Our students are being taught many different strategies to be able to read with understanding. It is no longer just a focus on the letters and sounds that come together to

make a word. Our students are being taught various ways to attack a new word when they are reading. Some of the strategies are:

- Look at a word and see if you can find smaller words in it
- Look for picture clues or clues from other sentences
- Read on and then go back to figure out the word. This gives a student more context for what the word could be
- Practice sight words and then recognize them in their reading
- Sound out words
- Sometimes even guessing is encouraged, but strategic guessing. Always asking the question: does that word make sense with the rest of the sentence?

One important factor that is stressed with our students is the ability to understand what they are reading. There have been some students who are fantastic at sounding out words and sound great when they are reading but when you ask them about what they have read, they cannot tell you. In the beginning it is normal for students to recite a book instead of read it. This is a beginning stage of reading. Eventually with instruction from the teacher, students go from reciting a book from memory to looking at each word and reading it. Our teachers know that students need to make a connection between what the words on the page are saying and what they take from these words. As students do more reading, learn more vocabulary, and use more strategies they go from “memory” reading to figuring out what the words are actually saying. It is a huge step for all readers and one that does not have a predictable date on when it will happen. Our teachers equip our students with the skills they need to go from recitation to reading with understanding.

### Reading activities at home

It is important to continue reading with your child even when they begin school. Reading and the enjoyment of literature needs to be encouraged both by you as a parent and by the school. Our students get the message from us that reading is important but they also need to know that the love of reading is fostered at home. There are many fun and easy ways to show your child that reading is enjoyable:

- Make books available to your child
- Read with and to your child-use silly voices, ask questions during the reading, make predictions on what might happen next

- Reading does not need to be a “storybook”. You can use magazines, comic books or strips, poems, newspapers, online information, or a recipe. Every child has different interests so tap into them when selecting reading material
- Visit the library to find some good books or access a reading program
- Be a good role model and let your child see you reading and talk about why you are reading-to learn something new, to enjoy a story, to find out an answer to a question

As children go through French immersion school and they begin reading books in English-usually in grade four-their willingness to read books in French may fade. At this point, even though you cannot help them read, you will need to continue to encourage them to read French books for pleasure. You could make it a time when your child reads to you and then explains what is happening in the story. It could be a reading trade; you read a book in English to your child and your child reads a book to you in French. Try to keep it as interesting as possible; look for books that your child will connect with. You do not want to make your child dread reading but see its value and importance.

### Who will teach my child to read in English?

Actually your child’s teacher will do this. But there are some things that you should be aware of when this happens. First, English is not introduced as a subject until grade four. Your child will be starting not quite at square one with reading at this point but close to it. Some parents feel that since their children’s first language is English they should be able to start reading in English right away without any trouble. This is not the case. Yes, the students have been taught strategies to use to read in French but they have not received any formal teaching for reading in English. There is a natural delay in the students’ ability to read in English that parents should expect and not worry about.

Over the year when English is introduced the students will be exposed to different types of English literature; poetry, narratives, short stories, information texts, etc. Through the teacher’s instruction the students will make connections with the reading strategies that they already use when reading French. They will not have to work on general vocabulary as English is their first language and they should already have an extensive English vocabulary. The work is taking all the reading strategies that they already use and transferring them over to use when reading English. So, over the year the teacher works on transferring these

reading strategies, exploring the differences between the two languages, building up the students' reading comprehension, and finding interesting texts to pique the students' interest. With the focus on reading English throughout the year, most of the students are at or close to grade level in reading in English by the end of the grade four.

### Do I teach my child to read in English?

It is important that you read with your child at home. If you are able to read in French with your child that is wonderful and we encourage you to continue to do this. If, like most of our parents, you are unable to read to your child in French fear not! We realize that most of our parents only speak, read, and write in English. This does not mean that you should forego reading because you cannot do it in French. The enjoyment of reading and engaging with different texts transcends languages. You can involve your child in reading at home in English without fear that you are doing something wrong. In fact we encourage our parents to read with their children at home. However, this does not mean that after school is out, English reading school begins. It means putting aside time to play word games, pick books from the library to read, make up your own stories, or even come up with an alternate ending to a favourite tale. Instilling a love of reading in your child and your child will reap the benefits from it.

### The writing process

A child makes squiggles on a page and the parents see squiggles but the child sees an entire story about a fairy princess. Another child draws a picture with wavy lines underneath it, the parents see a picture of a tent by a lake but the child sees a story about a camping trip. The beginning stages of writing for a child can begin as soon as they have ideas about stories and the tools to "write" one. The writing process for our students, similar to the reading process, reaches different stages at different times than students learning to write in their first language. The process that they go through is the same but because they first need to know the vocabulary well to be able to write with it, there is a bit of a delay in when the students reach each stage. Just as the students need to be exposed to French language extensively before they are able to read with understanding, it is the same for writing with meaning. We want our students to be able to write in French not to first think in English then translate it into French. For this process to happen our students need to have enough vocabulary to work with. This does not mean that we wait to start the writing

process with the students. It does mean that many of our students are writing independently at a later age than their English cohorts.

Generally students are beginning to write in kindergarten. This looks quite different than what parents may think of as writing. For parents you may think that your child should be writing words and sentences for it to be an actual piece of writing but the beginning stages of writing for children focus on pictures. Writing for our students looks like:

- Exploration-scribbles, marks on a paper, pictures
- Pre-conventional-detailed drawing, random letters, oral telling of story to an adult
- Emergent-beginning to sound out words, may only use initial letter to represent an entire word, words go from left to right on the page usually without spaces between them, still has detailed pictures
- Developing-words are meaningful, some sentences, conventions may be used but not consistently-spaces between words, capital at the beginning of a sentence and a period at the end, spelling is mostly phonetic
- Beginning-may or may not include pictures, has a topic with some details, simple sentences with some conventions-capital letters and periods, correct spelling of commonly known words, phonetic spelling of unknown words
- Novice-specific topic with details, easy to read, simple organization, use of conventions, may play with the language and sentence structure, using more conventional spelling
- Bridging-developing the topic more, use of more complex sentence structure, use of conventions more consistent, more powerful vocabulary used, applies conventional spelling rules
- Expanding-explores topic with focus, details are more in-depth, expanded vocabulary and sentence structures used, considers audience, conventional spelling and use of tools-dictionary, thesaurus
- Independent-well developed topic, complexity in writing structure as well as the information, variety in vocabulary and sentence structure<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Developmental Writing Continuum. Retrieved on January 26, 2013 from [www.slcschools.org/departments/assessment-and-evaluation/documents/Writing-Continuum.pdf](http://www.slcschools.org/departments/assessment-and-evaluation/documents/Writing-Continuum.pdf)



These are the stages that children move through as they learn to write. Our objective for our students' writing is to make them as independent as possible in their writing abilities. These abilities are on a continuum, meaning that there is a progression from one stage to another. Students within a class may be at different stages on the continuum but are always moving to the next stage. Generally speaking the stages are connected to a chronological age of students learning to write in their first language. For our students their chronological ages do not necessarily correspond to the expected ones on the continuum due to learning in a second language. However, we are always working to move them along the continuum to independent writers.

### Strategies for writing

Our students are being taught many different strategies to become independent writers. They will need to make a transition from thinking in English, translating this to French, then writing this in French to simply thinking and writing in French. They need to learn about the mechanics of writing-spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization- as well as style-sentence and paragraph structure, vocabulary choice, voice, imagery, and audience. As with any new skill the teacher uses a scaffolding technique to aid the students in acquiring writing skills. Instructional scaffolding is when the teacher models the chosen skill or strategy for the students then the teacher builds in supports as the students are learning to use the chosen skill until the students are able to independently use the skill. Some students move quickly through the scaffolding technique on to independence with the chosen skill and others may need the supports for a longer period of time. Our teachers are aware of the abilities of their students and adjust their instruction to connect with this.

In the beginning the teachers are transcribing the writing for the students; then the students are beginning to write letters with their drawings, then on to words, and eventually sentences. In the beginning stages of writing our students' lack of experience with the language makes it difficult for them to write a complete thought. Therefore, many of our teachers use a frame sentence approach. This is when the students together with the teacher come up with the beginning of a sentence and then the ending is left to the students to finish with words they know, words they sound out, or words they find in the classroom. The teachers vary the sentences for each writing session so that eventually the students have

many different examples of sentences that they then can use in their independent writing.

Some writing strategies that our students are using when writing are:

- Sounding out words phonetically to spell them
- Copying words and sentences from books in the classroom
- Using word walls to find words that they want to write; a word wall is when teachers put up vocabulary words that are related to the ideas that the students are learning so the students can easily find them
- Reading over their writing to make sure it makes sense
- Editing writing for mistakes in spelling, grammar, punctuation-this is sometimes done as a peer activity where the students edit a classmate's writing
- Brainstorming a topic to generate a list of ideas to use in their writing-this is a whole class activity that eventually each student will learn to do on their own
- Use a dictionary or a thesaurus to check spelling or to find a different word
- Word games to increase vocabulary and to practice skills
- Connecting their writing and their reading-"we have read that word before in this book" or "this book has information on whales for your report"

These strategies are some of the most common ones that our teachers use when instructing the students in writing. It is by no means all that we do when moving our students along the writing continuum. It is important that our students see themselves as writers and that we applaud their accomplishments along the way. It is wonderful when the students in grade one or two take a look at their writing journal in June. This written document shows how much they have grown as a writer since the beginning of the school year. Sometimes the students have gone from only copying a sentence to writing several sentences on their own. Helping to make that connection for our students is important and it demonstrates their success as well.

### Writing activities at home

It is important to encourage your child to write at home. It is key to remember that writing is a process that continuously develops. The more children are exposed to examples of writing, the more skills they will learn from the writing. As parents it is important to understand that your child's writing abilities will continuously develop and to not push them beyond what they are capable of doing. If you have not seen writing from a four year old



before it may not look like what you think writing should look like. It may or may not have letters, the picture will tell the story, or letters may be randomly placed on the paper. When your younger child is bringing writing for you to read ask your child to read it to you first. Children need to see themselves as writers or they will not want to write. So in the beginning expect interesting spelling for words, letters that are printed backwards or upside down, no spaces between words, and printing that goes right to left. Eventually with practice, encouragement, modeling of writing, and seeing good examples of writing your child will become a skilled writer. There are many fun and easy ways to encourage writing in your child:

- Write a story in the form of a comic strip-with this the picture is the focus until your child has enough written language to fill in the boxes
- Write a story together-you are then modeling some ways to write. As you are writing think out loud so your child can understand what you are doing
- Play word games-hangman, crossword puzzles, word searches
- Write thank you notes or invitations to friends or relatives-you can work on the editing strategy with this activity. You can stress that this note is going to someone else to read so the spelling should be correct and the printing should be neat
- Write a letter to a relative and encouraging the relative to write back
- Write a daily or weekly journal-this could be an activity that everyone in the family takes part in. You could have a family journal that each one takes a turn writing in as well as personal journals
- Make lists-chores, groceries, sleep over gear

Creating an atmosphere where writing is fun and valued is important. Use different tools for writing-coloured paper, markers, special pencils, post it notes, cards, coloured pencils, the computer. Unless you are very comfortable writing in French the writing that you do at home can be in English. There is no research that suggests this could cause problems with your child's learning. So, continue to encourage your child's writing so there will be an understanding of its value.

## Who will teach my child to write in English?

In grade four, English as a subject is introduced to our students. It is at this point that students are beginning to write in English. The classroom teacher will be helping the students to use all the strategies that they already use for writing in French to be able to write in English. One of the most obvious difficulties with our students' English writing is their spelling. Since our students do not have the same exposure to written English as do their English counterparts, there exists a lag in their spelling abilities. This may continue for quite some time but as the students gain experience with writing and learn strategies to spell in English this lag should diminish. It is important that you as a parent are aware that there is a natural delay in our students' spelling abilities in English and to not worry about it. Over the year your child's English writing will change, the amount they write will increase, and their spelling should improve. If you have questions about your child's writing abilities, the classroom teacher is the best source of information.

## What if my child is struggling to learn?

At one time our French immersion program was known as an elitist program that had strong academic students in it. As well there was the opinion that French immersion students did not need learning support. In the past it was thought that if French immersion students were struggling they should just move to an English program. But times, thankfully, have changed. Our school has become more diverse in the families that are choosing to attend French immersion as well as the learning abilities that the students are coming to school with. Also, our school and staff have become better equipped to help those students who may be struggling or need some extra learning support. Moving your child to an English program is no longer the first option when there may be a struggle with learning.

As a parent you may wonder what happens to learning in a second language if your child either has a learning disability or one is uncovered once attending school. Fortunately the research on French immersion students who are at risk of academic difficulties is positive. In reviewing the research there is no solid evidence that says moving a child who is struggling in the French immersion program to an English program will be beneficial to the child (Bruck, 1978; Cummins, 1979; Genesee, 2007). This is because generally speaking learning difficulties are skills or concept based. This means that if your child is

having difficulty learning to read in French they will have the same difficulty in English. Reading is a skill that requires the use of many different strategies. Children could be struggling with making the connections between the letters on the page and the sounds that they make. They will still have this struggle in English. For some parents the choice to move their child to an English program is so that the parents can then help the child; whereas they cannot help them in French. If this is the choice you need to make, we will understand but remember that it is not the only choice.

If there are students who are struggling with a concept, vocabulary, reading, math, or learning in general your child's teacher is the first person to either recognize this or that you should speak with. For children in the French immersion program to be successful they need to be motivated, supported, and have a positive learning environment. Having a learning difficulty or learning disability does not mean that a student should leave the French immersion program. Students who have learning difficulties can be successful in the French immersion program if they are supported in their learning. At our school there is a learner support teacher who works with the teachers and students to help those students who may have some learning challenges. Sometimes the help is short term to get the student over a learning hurdle-subtraction with regrouping- and sometimes it is supporting the teacher so that more in-depth work with students is possible. It is important to understand that when learning difficulties happen, the school is ready to look at ways to help the students overcome them.

If you feel that your child is struggling in some way with learning, speak with the teacher. Usually the teacher has already noticed this and is looking at ways to support your child. It may be that your child will need some learner support. Our learner support teacher works two days a week with students or in classes. For many of our students having some focused learning time either alone or with a small group is all they need to see an improvement. The key to assisting our students is the use of appropriate supports for their learning. This may mean vocabulary development to help with reading, or this could be pre-teaching of a concept for students who may need the concepts broken down into smaller pieces, or review of a past skill that is a building block for a new skill. Sometimes the classroom teacher recognizes this and is able to do it alone and sometimes the teacher and

learner support teacher work together to accomplish this. Helping a struggling student become successful is what our goal is.

When a learning difficulty first presents itself it is not cause to immediately move your child to an English program. You need to consider if the difficulty is specifically with the French language (rarely) or with a skill, what type of learning environment exists for your child both in French immersion and in an English school, what supports are available for your child both in French immersion and in an English school, and how will moving your child to a different school affect your child and the motivation to learn. For some parents this is a complex issue. It is important that the decision you make is in the best interest of your child, not the French immersion program nor your personal choice. Consider taking time to gathered information from your child's teacher and learner support teacher, talk with other parents, and if your child is old enough, talk with your child before making a decision. In the end we all want what is best for our children.

### **French beyond the classroom**

You as parents play an important role in your child's education. With your child going to a French immersion school you may want to do some fun activities at home in French. Since there is not a large French culture within our community the children are not exposed to French on a daily basis outside of school. They need to be shown that learning in French is important and that this learning can happen outside the classroom. However you include French into your home life will depend totally on your comfort level with the French language. By incorporating French into your daily lives it will demonstrate the importance of learning the language for your child. As well, many of the suggestions do not even require you to speak the language.

### **Literature**

Having French books available to your child at the appropriate reading level is a simple way to promote your child's reading and speaking the French language outside the classroom. Your child can share a book with you by reading it and then telling you what it was about. Through our school there are Scholastic book orders that come out usually every six to eight weeks. These book orders have both French and English books available. Also in the orders there are books with CDs that tell the story. This may help many of our parents with the "I cannot read it" syndrome. As well, our public library has a great selection of



French books, books with cassette tapes, and literacy bags with language activities in them. As well, on the library's website you can find some French e-books through the Tumble books link: [www.teracelibrary.ca/kids/links](http://www.teracelibrary.ca/kids/links). The e-books for beginners are helpful because the book is read aloud as well as the text being highlighted on the page as it is being read- both parents and children can learn some new vocabulary.

Literature does not necessarily have to be from a story book. There are graphic novels, cartoons, comic books, and magazines. Eventually as your child's reading ability increases you can access French newspapers online. Encouraging your child to read to you and with you can give you time to connect during the day. It will also give you some idea of what interests your child has. If your child does not want to read a story book but would rather read a book about skiing then find books in French on this topic. There could be some at the school library so let your child's teacher know so that your child can be directed to the right section in the library to find books in French on a particular subject.

### Radio, television, film, and music

There are many ways parents and children can access the French language beyond books and magazines. One of the easiest ways is through radio and television. There is CBC's Radio-Canada which is an all French radio station. They speak in French; have interviews in French with authors, politicians, or singers; the news is in French, and they play French music as well. They do speak rather quickly so this may be something that you could make a game of at first: listen for a word you know in French, then move on to an expression, then sentences. Parents can even play along. This is a great game for that long drive to visit grandma or on the way to school in the morning. It develops the listening capacity of both children and adults and it may be fun to see who can identify more French words-children or parents.

Depending on what type of television service you have, cable or satellite, you may have some French channels available. Watching a show together and having your child help you figure out what is going on helps encourage that feeling of being a teacher instead of the student. Of course, it is important to find out the programming before settling down to see a show.

Many parents may have already discovered this trick but most DVD's have a language selection in the main menu. You can easily set this to French, especially for

movies that have been watched over and over. In watching a familiar movie you already know the storyline so focusing on the language is easier. Children usually have favourite movies that they can recite the dialogue of so flip this around and have them focus on the French language that they hear. It is another way to continue to develop the listening skills that so many French immersion students have greatly improved over the years.

Music is a fantastic way to familiarize children with a language. It can help to settle children down, burn off some energy, and to help to learn some new words. Charlotte Diamond and Matt Maxwell both have engaging music and songs that many younger children enjoy listening to and eventually singing along to. If you are looking for music videos for your younger children, Alain Le Lait has several dealing with basic concepts such as colours, numbers, and animals. These videos are found on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and are fun and engaging. You just need to do a search for Alain Le Lait and you will easily find a list of many different clips. With the internet and especially youtube it is easy to find music and musical artists from Quebec. As children grow, their musical tastes grow and change. They do not always need to be listening to music in English when there exists a considerable amount of French music. Just a quick internet search can produce a list of many different artists to explore. It would be a great experience to look for and find an interesting new musical group that both you and your child enjoy listening to.

## Websites

The internet is filled with French game websites and after looking at several of them it is turning out to be true-sometimes too much of a good thing is not so great. It is important that you are aware of the websites your child is visiting. Children are curious beings and the internet can be a dangerous playground. After sorting through some good and some bad sites I have come up with some sites that I would recommend for encouraging children in their French language acquisition. This list is not comprehensive but is current. As the internet is a very changeable environment this list will change as well. I have also left space for you to write down websites that you have found that your child enjoys using.





## The world around you

It is possible to find the French culture even in our region. There are a few events that are happening yearly that I would suggest families take part in. Our local Canadian Parents for French chapter puts on a Cabane à sucre each winter usually in the month of February. This has taken place at the Onion Lake cross country ski trails for the past two years. The entire festival is outside and takes advantage of the winter snow. There are skiing and snowshoeing events, maple syrup treats, and a visit from Bonhomme Carnaval. It is growing bigger each year and is a fun event to take your children to. As well, Prince Rupert has a Festival d'hiver which is a similar event to the Cabane à sucre. This usually happens in January and there is French music, movies, and food. It usually goes over a weekend with different events happening on each day. It may take a bit of research but if you really want to include the French culture in your family's life outside of school it can happen.

There are also day camps, outdoor camps, exchanges, and family vacation camps that you may want to look for. The British Columbia and Yukon branch of Canadian Parents for French's website has listings of camps in the province - <http://www.cpf.bc.ca/site3/index.php/home> . You may want to schedule your vacation around one of these fun camps. Recently there have been French literacy programs happening at the Terrace public library. Just have a look on their website to see upcoming programs. Since there are not many programs or camps available locally it may take some research to find one that may work for your child or for your entire family. But putting forth this extra effort shows to your child that you believe in the importance of the French language.

## Resources for parents

As your child goes through the French immersion program you may want to do more than monitor homework and encourage the learning process. This section will have some information for you to access to help you increase your knowledge of the French language as well as links to educational resources.

## Language information

Here is a pronunciation guide to help you when your child is reading in French:

- stress falls on the last syllable (ami sounds like am-ee)

- the sounds of the consonants are essentially the same in French and English
- there is significant difference between the sounds of the vowels in French and English
- **h** is always silent in French
- an **s** at the end of a word, to indicate plural, is **silent**
- **qu** sounds like **k** (not kw as quiet)
- **th** is pronounced **t**
- **ch** is pronounced like the English **sh**
- **i** is pronounced like the long English **e** (see)
- **ou** always sounds like **troop** (not out)
- **oi** sounds like **wa** in wash
- **au** and **eau** have the **long o** sound (go)
- **ez** has the **long a** sound (say)
- accents change the way vowels sound: **è** sounds like the **short e**, **é** sounds like the **long a**, **ê** sounds like the **short e**, and **ç** sounds like **s**
- when a word begins with a vowel or a silent **h**, it is usually joined with the last consonant of the preceding word-it sounds like your child is reading one word instead of two

When your child begins English language arts in school there are some differences between the languages that you may want to reinforce at home. They are:

- there are many differences in the vowel sounds
- a silent **e** at the end of a word in English changes the sound that the vowel makes and will need to be explained-i.e. **man**, **mane**
- the sound of **h** will be introduced as it is not pronounced in French
- the sound of **qu** as in **quiet** will be introduced
- the sound of **th** will be introduced
- the sound of **x** and **w** will be introduced as they are rarely used in French
- the other sounds for the letter **y** will be introduced
- the effect of vowel + **r** combinations (**ar**, **or**, **ur**) will need to be reinforced as there is not a significant change in this combination in French

## Home reference material

As your child continues through the French immersion program it is a wise choice to invest in some home reference material. It is not totally necessary but will be helpful as the amount of French that your child is learning increases. Some suggestions are:

- a picture dictionary for the beginning years or have an online picture dictionary saved in your internet favourites; make sure that you review the pictures before allowing your child access; some suggested paper dictionaries are The Usborne Picture Dictionary in French, French-English Picture Dictionary by Catherine Bruzzone and Louise Millar, or The Usborne First 1 000 Words in French by Heather Amery
- a good beginning French dictionary-this should be fairly simple with illustrations if possible and the words used in sentences; it is important that students understand how to use a dictionary to find words and having access to one at home encourages putting these skills to use; a suggestion is Le Robert Benjamin by Collectif
- a more in depth French dictionary as your child continues into upper elementary-this should have a pronunciation guide, indicate the parts of speech, and common expressions the word is used in as well as different forms of the word; a suggestion is Petit Larousse illustre or Le Petit Robert
- a good French – English dictionary is always important to have for your child and you; some suggestions are Merriam-Webster’s French-English Dictionary, Larousse Concise French-English Dictionary, or Larousse Student Dictionary French-English
- a Bescherelle L’Art de Conjuguer which is a complete guide to verb conjugations; students usually start using this in grade four
- as your child begins to write more a good book of synonyms and antonyms is recommended such as Le Dictionnaire des synonymes et des contraires

All of the reference books mentioned are available to purchase online at [www.amazon.ca](http://www.amazon.ca) .

## Websites for parent resources

There are difference sources of information that can be found online. Here is a listing of some websites to visit if looking for more resources:

- Canadian Parents for French offer resources through their website- [www.cpf.ca](http://www.cpf.ca) for the national branch and [www.cpf.bc.ca](http://www.cpf.bc.ca) for the local branch. They have information directly accessible from the website as well as other information for purchase.
- Ministry of Education for British Columbia- <http://www.gov.bc.ca/bced/>. This site has a parent section for up to date information on education in BC. You can also view the curriculums for all grade levels so that you know what your child should be learning in each subject.
- <http://www.pourapprendre.ca/default.html>. This site is through Alberta's 2Learn.ca and has links to many different types of resources-dictionaries, videoclips, news channels, magazines, etc.
- Renaud-Bray is a publishing company where you can find books, DVD's, games, and music in French. There is a variety of resources for children from preschool to youth. You can access it online at <http://www.renaud-bray.com/home.aspx>
- Oui for Kids is another online company that specializes in French books, music, DVD's, and computer software. They can be accessed at <http://www.ouiforkids.com/>
- Eworkshop is a spreadsheet of book titles sorted by reading level. They go from level one to 18 (about grade 4). It is set up by book title, book collection, and publisher. You can then look up the titles yourself. They can be accessed at [http://www.eworkshop.on.ca/edu/gradation/niveaux.cfm?NIV\\_NBR=16](http://www.eworkshop.on.ca/edu/gradation/niveaux.cfm?NIV_NBR=16)
- Our school website has current events happening in our school. We can be accessed at <http://mountainview.cmsd.bc.ca/>

This "helpbook" is dedicated to all of the students who have put their time and effort into learning in the French language. It is also dedicated to their parents who believe in the French immersion program.

## Studies mentioned in this handbook

### Articles about language transfer:

Comeau, L., Cormier, P., Grandmaison, E., & Lacroix, D. (1999). A longitudinal study of phonological processing skills in children learning to read in a second language. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 91(1), 29-43. Retrieved March 26, 2009 from PsychINFO database

Cummis, J. (1979). Linguistic Interdependence and the Educational Development of Bilingual Children. *Review of Educational Research*, 49(2), 222-251.

Cummins, J. (1998). Immersion for the millennium: What have we learned from 30 years of research on second language immersion. Retrieved March 26, 2009 from [www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/immersion2000.html](http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/immersion2000.html)

MacCoubrey, S., Wade-Woolley, L., Klinger, D., & Kirby, J. (2004). Early Identification of At-Risk L2 Readers. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 61(1), 11-28.

### Articles about students leaving the French immersion program when they are struggling academically:

Bruck, M. (1978). The suitability of early French immersion programs for the language disabled child. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 35, 884-887.

Cummis, J. (1979). Should the child who is experiencing difficulties in early immersion be switched to the regular English program? *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 36, 139-143.

Genesse, F. (2007). French immersion and At-Risk Students: A Review of Research Evidence. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63(5), 655-688.



## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

“Education is about people working and learning together. It is about building relationships with the students and adults in an effort to create a learning community” (Hierck, 2011). It is my belief that even though it is the students and school staff who are in the classrooms and are visually part of the “learning community,” there are more people involved in the education of those students: parents. There is a myth that parents of French immersion students cannot help their children because they do not speak the language. As well, some French immersion parents themselves feel this myth to be true. The purpose of this project was to create a handbook for parents at my French immersion school and help these parents dispel that myth. The motivating reason for creating the handbook was to encourage the parents at my school to involve themselves in their children’s education. The handbook gives these parents a guide to use with concrete ways to become an involved parent.

I have been involved in the French immersion program in many capacities and these experiences have influenced the way I have worked within this project. In the past, in my role as a French immersion teacher, I tried to encourage parents to work with their children at home on different skills in their first language. Currently, in my role as school administrator, I have answered parents’ questions about helping their children at home in English or if they need to speak French, for it to be beneficial. Additionally, as well as my role as a French immersion parent, I have been told by a teacher to leave the teaching for the school staff and just read with my child. These different experiences led me to create the handbook for the parents at my school. Many of these parents need concrete information

about, not only the program their children are enrolling in but, ways they can become involved with their children's learning at home.

At my school, parents are an untapped resource. Many of them are eager to help their children but are unsure which direction they should follow. I realized that in my role as administrator, I reach out to a fraction of the parent population through newsletters, website posts, and conversations. It is important to the students at my school that I make efforts to involve as many parents as possible in their children's educations. I believe that students who have involved parents are more focused in school, are more in tune with their learning, and have a higher rate of overall achievement. The research on parent involvement confirms this potential, so in creating this handbook I have made an attempt to foster this involvement.

Through my own experience as a French immersion parent, I realized that there is little support for parents who have children in French immersion. French immersion parents have the same goals as other parents; they want their children to be happy at school and to be successful in their learning. They also have the same need as other parents; they want to be able to help their children attain these goals. Their children enter into a public school system with the same guidelines and the same expectations as other public schools but the language of instruction at their children's school is French. Most of the parents of French immersion students are Anglophone. So, they are unsure of how to assist their children. This lack of information for French immersion parents was another motivating factor in creating this handbook. This handbook is written in English and is specifically directed at French immersion parents. It contains easy-to-use strategies for parents who want to be involved in their children's educations. Additionally, the handbook includes information



about the French immersion program, ways that children learn in the French immersion program, and resources that the parents can access.

Throughout this project I have analyzed five different French immersion parent handbooks and used the data from this analysis to create my own handbook. These handbooks presented me with different frameworks, different information, and different ways to convey information to parents. The information from some of the handbooks was rich and valuable and the information from others was scant and opinion based. In using content analysis I was able to distill the important messages from these handbooks. Through the content analysis, I discovered important themes that initially were not part of my handbook framework. It was valuable to use content analysis for this project as it allowed me to find meaningful data to use in the parent handbook. For the creation of this handbook, it was important to use the data from the content analysis in connection not only with my research question, but to also make links with the needs of the parents at my school. This handbook's audience is the parents at my school, so the information contained in it also needed to be connected to the needs of these parents.

There are some limitations to this project. Although the audience for the handbook is the parents at my school, I did not involve them directly in the research. As I was using content analysis for the main research methodology, interviewing parents was beyond the scope of this study. I did however; use my experience with the parents at my school to assist me in making selections of information to include in the handbook. Another limitation is my lack of research experience. This is the first time I have completed a content analysis and as such there may be areas where the analysis may not be perfectly executed. I did

follow procedure to the best of my ability and used research on content analysis methodology to guide me through the process.

There are some recommendations that I have for the handbook. Currently, it is in a paper format. For it to be easily accessed by many of our parents, I recommend that it be put into a digital format on my school website. In having the handbook in this format, parents can then easily use the web links that are contained in the resource section of the handbook. As well, information changes rapidly on the internet so the handbook will need to be consistently updated with not only current information but current web addresses and links.

As I reflect on this project, I believe that this parent handbook will be a valuable resource for the parents at my school. The work that I have done in creating this handbook has given me solid, research-proven information that I can convey to the parents of my school. The work and research on this project has solidified my belief that parents need to be encouraged to be involved in their children's educations and with the handbook, I have given them some concrete, simple ways to become more involved. I, personally, have benefitted from the work and research conducted in the writing of this handbook. I believe that, ultimately, in helping the parents of my school, it is the students who will receive the most benefits. As I stated in my proposal, I believe that it is part of my moral purpose to both my students and their families to develop ways to nurture the involvement of our parents with their children's educations and with their school. This handbook has given the parents and students at my school ways to develop this involvement.

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## Handbook Exemplars

*Yes You Can Help!: Information and Inspiration for Parents of French Immersion Students.* (2010). Retrieved July 3, 2012 from <http://education.alberta.ca/francais/parents/youcanhelp.aspx>

*French Immersion Parent Handbook.* Calgary Catholic School District. Retrieved July 7, 2012 from [www.cssd.ab.ca/default.asp?V\\_ITEM\\_ID=254](http://www.cssd.ab.ca/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=254)

*French Immersion Handbook for Parents.* Central Ontario East Consultants Association. Retrieved July 3, 2012 from [www.amherstviewps.limestone.on.ca/documents/french\\_immersion\\_handbook](http://www.amherstviewps.limestone.on.ca/documents/french_immersion_handbook)

*French Immersion A Parent Handbook Kindergarten to Grade 5.* (2000). Saskatchewan Education. Retrieved July 17, 2012 from [http://www.Education.gov.sk.ca/parent\\_info\\_handbk\\_kto5\\_2000](http://www.Education.gov.sk.ca/parent_info_handbk_kto5_2000)

*Early French Immersion A Parent Guide.* School District 22 Vernon. Retrieved July 3, 2012 from [www.sd22.bc.ca](http://www.sd22.bc.ca)



## APPENDIX 1- HANDBOOK SUMMARY SHEET

### Handbook Summary

This is an overview of each handbook that I am using in my content analysis. I have reviewed each one for amount of pages, the overall structure, if it contains text only, if it is available as a hard copy only or online as well. I may add to this list as I go along.

#### Handbook 1

**Title:** Yes You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for Parents of French Immersion Students

**From:** Government of Alberta

**# of pages:** 74 in the hard copy

**Overall structure:**

\*table of contents

\*12 different sections with subsections in each

\*sections are topic related:

-terminology -2 subsections/2 pages

-advantages of L2 – 3 subsections/3 pages

-history and program information – 12 subsections/14 pages

-parents and helping – 9 subsections/12 pages

-reading – 9 subsections/6 pages

-writing – 3 subsections/4 pages

-secondary school – 5 subsections/4 pages

-French outside school – 6 subsections/6 pages

-student not happy – 3 pages

-problems – 7 subsections/8 pages

-grads of FI- 3 pages

**Text only no graphics**

**Available:** online and hard copy

#### Handbook 2

**Title:** French Immersion Parent Handbook

**From:** Calgary Catholic School District

**# of pages:** 12 – each page is half of a letter sized page on landscape format

**Overall structure:**

\*table of contents



\*5 sections with subsections in each

\*sections are topic related:

- description of FI – 1 page
- types of programs – 2 pages
- benefits of L2 – 2 pages
- decision to enroll – 2 pages
- FAQ's – 4 pages

**Text and photos of students**

**Available:** online and hard copy

### **Handbook 3**

**Title:** French Immersion Handbook for Parents

**From:** Central Ontario East

**# of pages:** 27

**Overall structure:**

\*table of contents

\*14 different sections – no subsections listed

\*sections are topic related:

- forward – 1 page
- intro – 1 page
- Q & A about FI – 2 pages
- parent support of FI program – 1 page
- how parents can help their child – 1 page
- reading – 4 pages
- language resources – list/3 pages
- French TV program list – excel table/1 page
- French internet sites – excel table/1 page
- French software – excel table/2 pages
- French music – excel table/1 page
- French camps/exchanges - list & excel table/4 pages
- sources of information – list/2 pages

**Text with some clip art, excel tables used for some information**

**Available:** in a hard copy

### **Handbook 4**

**Title:** French Immersion Kindergarten to grade 5- A Parent Information Handbook

**From:** Saskatchewan Education 2000

**# of pages:** 32

**Overall structure:**

- \*table of contents
- \*4 main sections with section 2 subdivided into various sections
- \*table of contents is topic related but section 2 is focused on each subject area
- general information on FI program-description of program, goals, benefits of L2, parent info/3 pages
- detailed information about specific subjects:
  - ~kindergarten program/3 pages
  - ~French and English LA/5pages
  - ~math/3pages
  - ~science/2pages
  - ~socials/2pages
  - ~health/2pages
  - ~PE/2pages
  - ~arts ed/2 pages
- \*\*\*\*\*within each section there is a piece on how parents can help their child
- resources/3 pages
- sources for further information/3 pages

**Text and clip art, text boxes to highlight information, arrows**

**Available:** in hard copy and online

**Handbook 5**

**Title:** School District #22 Early French Immersion – A parent guide

**From:** Vernon, BC School District # 22

**# of pages:** 6 pages in hard copy

**Overall structure:**

- \*no table of contents
- \*sections are delineated by bold font with either a question or a title
- \*sections are topic related:
  - description of FI/one sentence
  - goals of program/list-6 sentences
  - benefits of FI/8 bullets-sentences
  - teaching of FI/3 sentences

- academic achievement/paragraph
- fluency/paragraph
- characteristic of successful students/list-paragraph for each of three factors
- parent commitment/list of 4 sentences
- learner/4 short paragraphs
- role of FI parent/3 paragraphs
- parents and homework/5 paragraphs
- CPF/paragraph
- after FI school/short paragraph
- work/half a page-list and paragraph
- addresses of individuals to contact-principals of schools and CPF chair

**Text only**

**Available:** in hard copy

## APPENDIX 2-HANDBOOK SPREADSHEET

Handbook Name and Place	Number of pages	Table of contents	General Structure	Accessible language used
French Immersion Handbook Calgary Catholic School District	12 pages: two columns on each page	Yes with 5 sections and subsections in each	Question and answer format	Accessible language for parents
School District #22 Early French Immersion- A parent guide Vernon, BC	6 pages	No table of contents-difficult to find specific information if needed. Section heading in bold font	Question and answer and then goes into paragraphs	Accessible to parents
French Immersion Handbook for Parents Central Ontario East	27 pages	Table of contents 14 sections no subsections	Starts with questions and answers for parents then goes into sections with text-paragraphs and tables	Accessible for parents
French Immersion Kindergarten to grade 5- A parent Information Handbook Saskatchewan Education 2000	32 pages	Table of contents with 4 main sections and section 2 subdivided into various sections	Generally a question and answer format	Accessible language for parents
Yes You Can Help! Information and inspiration for Parent of French Immersion Students Alberta Education	74 pages	Table of contents with 12 sections and subsections	General text format: paragraphs, lists, web links	Not as accessible to parents – some jargon and technical terminology

Handbook Name and Place	Graphics or text only	Homework help included	Program overview: simple or in depth	Benefits of L2 explained
French Immersion Handbook Calgary Catholic School District	Some photos but mostly text	In FAQ section homework is address but not in depth	Overview includes enough information and includes the various formats of FI-early, late, etc. Goals included.	Benefits explained well
School District #22 Early French Immersion- A parent guide Vernon, BC	Text only	Ways to help with homework included	Very simple-one sentence Goals of the program are listed	Explained well-8 benefits
French Immersion Handbook for Parents Central Ontario East	Text only with tables included	Ways to help with homework included Pronunciation guide for French included	Fairly simple No goals for the program	Explained well
French Immersion Kindergarten to grade 5- A parent Information Handbook Saskatchewan Education 2000	Heavy use of clipart, diagrams, text boxes- too busy. Text as well	Yes in general terms. Nothing specific to FI homework.	Fairly simple Goals of the program listed	Benefits are listed
Yes You Can Help! Information and inspiration for Parent of French Immersion Students Alberta Education	All text with bold fonts used to highlight subsections	Has its own section with 12 pages of information Good tips and support	Comprehensive description with history included Goals of program included	Well explained

Handbook Name and Place	How to help beyond homework	Parent Resources	Reading section	Writing Section
French Immersion Handbook Calgary Catholic School District	A few references in the FAQ section	CPF is mentioned and that is it	No	No
School District #22 Early French Immersion- A parent guide Vernon, BC	How to be involved in the school itself	CPF and a list of schools with contact numbers	No	No
French Immersion Handbook for Parents Central Ontario East	How to support the program and the child not just with homework	Well-developed tables of reading, music, TV, software, websites, grammar books, etc. for parents to access	Yes a short one on suggestions Pronunciation guide	No
French Immersion Kindergarten to grade 5- A parent Information Handbook Saskatchewan Education 2000	Extensively explained but not specific to FI program could be the English stream	Yes-CPF. Le lien- a resource center with French items Publication in French	Language Arts section – kindergarten, grade 1 – 4.	Language Arts section – kindergarten, grade 1 – 4.
Yes You Can Help! Information and inspiration for Parent of French Immersion Students Alberta Education	Has its own section with 5 pages of information	Web links to Alberta ed and two other sites CPF is mentioned but this topic is not well explored	Detailed section on reading both in French and English!	Detailed section on this. Activities to do in English. Grammar French vs English to help parents



Handbook	French beyond the classroom	Learning disabilities	Digital or hard copy	Web links included
French Immersion Handbook Calgary Catholic School District	Camps and exchanges	Yes-includes process for addressing issues. <b>Rationale: experience diff. should be taught in their first language.</b>	Only hard copy	No
School District #22 Early French Immersion- A parent guide Vernon, BC	Just the work world	Nothing mentioned	Only hard copy	No
French Immersion Handbook for Parents Central Ontario East	Camps, exchanges with contact information	A short paragraph and the advice to speak with teacher	Hard copy	Yes in the tables but not to link to from the handbook
French Immersion Kindergarten to grade 5- A parent Information Handbook Saskatchewan Education 2000	NO	No	Hard copy	No
Yes You Can Help! Information and inspiration for Parent of French Immersion Students Alberta Education	Camps exchanges, ways to bring French into the home	Full section on this with advice, processes, etc. Good tips – early warning signs.	Digital and hard copy	Yes on Alberta Education digital copy direct links