

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE NO. 213

FRENCH LANGUAGE IMMERSION PROGRAM

Background

In recognition of the two official languages of our nation, the Board believes that it should provide opportunity for its students to receive instruction to acquire and maintain proficiency in the French language through the provision of a K – 12 French Immersion program delivered within the context of Catholic teachings and traditions.

Guidelines

1. The French immersion program shall be operated in accordance with Alberta Education Policy 1.5.2, and with existing Division policies and procedures.
2. French immersion programs are designed for children whose first language is other than French. Children whose first language is French and want a Catholic education are welcome to participate in the French Immersion Program.
3. Every effort will be made to employ personnel who possess and demonstrate knowledge and proficiency of and the commitment to the French language and culture.
4. French immersion courses will only be offered at schools designated as French immersion sites.
5. French Immersion students and French Second Language students must not be combined in the same classroom for French instruction.

Procedures

1. The minimum amount of instructional time offered in French will be as follows:

Kindergarten – Grade 2	90% French instruction
Grades 3 – 5	70% French instruction
Grades 6 – 9	65% French instruction
Grades 10 – 12	50% French instruction
2. The entry points for students beginning French immersion with no previous knowledge of French is Kindergarten and grade 1. Students in grades 2 – 12 will be expected to have had previous bilingual education experience. Entry after grade 1 will be determined on individual merit at the school level.

3. Wherever possible, a variety of instructional strategies and resources will be utilized and these should emphasize the development of communication skills and the attainment of those skills and objectives specific to the particular courses taught in French.
4. Adequate in-service opportunities should be made available to teachers to upgrade their teaching skills, mastery of the French language and knowledge of French culture.
5. Students experiencing academic difficulties should have reasonable opportunity for remedial services within the French immersion program. In the event that the best decision is for the student to withdraw from French immersion, the school will ensure consultation occurs with parents and that a transition plan is developed to assist the student with movement to a more suitable program.
6. The use of French for non-school related communication enhances mastery of the language. Thus the use of French outside the classroom is strongly encouraged.
7. The content of all courses taught in the French language is to be consistent with the content as prescribed in the Programme d'Etudes.
8. A French Immersion certificate shall be granted to grade 12 students who successfully complete 54 French immersion program credits or as decided by the principal.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE NO. 213**APPENDIX 'A'
TRANSFERRING A CHILD OUT OF FRENCH IMMERSION**

Parents, administrators, and teachers sometime consider transferring a child out of the French Immersion program when the child is experiencing difficulties. Before choosing to transfer a child out of French Immersion, parents, administrators, and teachers should consider the following:

(a) Have the child's hearing and vision checked. Sometimes, placing the child closer to the front of the classroom or obtaining glasses can remedy problems in achievement, behaviour, or attention. A previous hearing loss (i.e. tubes in ears at a young age or frequent ear infections that resulted in hearing loss) can have long-lasting effects and possibly delay language acquisition.

(b) Consider bringing the Special Education Resource Teacher into the French Immersion classroom during an English period if you do not have access to a French-Speaking Resource Teacher, so that the French Immersion teacher can work one-on-one with the student in French for the purpose of assessment.

(c) Pursue short-term intensive resource room assistance in order to better assess and/or address the concern. Sometimes, as in English, students require intensive one-on-one instruction. Informal or formal assessment can be done at this time along with some language specific remediation.

(d) Speak to the Special Education Resource Teacher about identifying potential difficulties in the areas of auditory processing or auditory memory. Research has shown that children with these types of learning exceptionalities will have difficulty learning language. Learning a second language will then be extra challenging for such a child if he/she hears French only at school.
The French Immersion program may not be the best option for this child.

(e) Assess the child's self-esteem. Is the child oblivious to difficulties he/she is having in the French Immersion classroom? Is his/her self-concept positive despite the difficulties he/she is having? Is the child happy in a French Immersion classroom? Does the child like French? Would a transfer out of the French Immersion program be taken by the child to be a failure that would impact on his/her self-concept in a negative way?

(f) Assess the child's coping strategies. Does the child have a clear understanding of his/her personal challenges? Does the child have strategies in place to deal with or circumvent his/her difficulties (i.e. working with a friend; using dictionaries, spell checkers, and other resources; doing extra work or study at home independently). Students identified with learning exceptionalities can and do experience success in a French Immersion program. Deciding whether or not to transfer out of French Immersion should be done on an individual basis.

(g) Sometimes a transfer out of the French Immersion program necessitates a move to another school (when the French Immersion school is not the child's home school). How might this move affect the child? Does the child already have siblings in the French Immersion program?

(h) If the language spoken at home is a language other than English or French, the child may experience a longer period of "interference" among the three languages he/she is learning. This does not necessarily mean that the child should transfer out of French Immersion. It may mean that there is a delay in French language acquisition. Research has shown that children who are learning French as a third language often do as well as or better than children who are learning French as a second language. However, it may take longer for the child for whom French is a third language to work out the interference.

(i) Decide, as a group—parents, teacher, and administrator—if the potential benefits to be gained by transferring out of the French Immersion program outweigh the potential problems. Such problems may include leaving friends, changing schools, experiencing feelings of failure or low self-esteem, continuing to cope with a learning difficulty in an English classroom, or catching up in English skills.

The basic question to be asked when considering a transfer out of French Immersion is, "Is French the source of the problem?" If the answer is yes, then transferring out of the program may be the solution. If the answer is no (for example, the source of the problem is social, behavioural, attitudinal), then transferring out of the French Immersion program will probably not solve the problem.

Parents must be made aware that a transfer out of the French Immersion program will not usually result in an instant solution for their child. The child will still have challenges to cope with in an English class. For some children and parents, coping with the challenges in English is preferable to coping in two languages. For other children and parents, adaptations within the French Immersion program are the best solution. Each case must be evaluated individually according to each child's unique abilities and needs.