

**SCHOOL DISTRICT # 71 (COMOX VALLEY)
FRENCH IMMERSION REGISTRATION
INFORMATION 2009-2010**

DISTRICT PARENT INFORMATION MEETING:
(for both École Puntledge Park and École Robb Road Schools)

January 27th, 2009, 7:00 - 8:00p.m.
École Puntledge Park Elementary School
401 Willemar Ave., Courtenay B.C.
250-334-4495

PROGRAM LOCATIONS:

École Puntledge Park Elementary School

401 Willemar Avenue
Courtenay, B.C. V9N 3L3
Phone #:250- 334-4495
Principal: Mr. C. Woolman
Vice Principal: Mrs. Cheryl Rabbitt
Website: http://qp.sd71.bc.ca/puntledge_park

École Robb Road Elementary School

1909 Robb Avenue
Comox, B.C. V9M 2C9
Phone #:250-339-6864
Principal: Mr. D. den Otter
Vice Principal: Ms. Erika Moser
Website: http://web.sd71.bc.ca/robb_road/

REGISTRATION DATES FOR 2009:

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Siblings: | February 11 | 7:30 - 12:00 noon |
| Open Registration: | February 12 | 7:30 - 12:00 noon |

For all information on Immersion questions, please contact the above schools.

A MESSAGE FROM THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Beginning school is an exciting time for both you and your child. It is a busy time for us and we look forward to working closely with you and your child.

This handbook was created to assist you in making the transition into the school system, particularly French Immersion. It will outline the Early French Immersion Program in the Comox Valley School District and provide an overview of the kindergarten program.

Your child's kindergarten teacher will be meeting with you and your child at some point during the last week of August or the first week of September. Students start in Kindergarten later than the other students going into grades 1-12. When the teacher meets with you and your child, there will be an opportunity to review various aspects of the program, as well as give you and your child an opportunity to ask questions as well

Kindergarten is an exciting new beginning for you and your child. We look forward to getting to know you both. We are certain that there will be a great deal of fun in kindergarten and they will learn many exciting things.

À Bientôt

Education Staff
École Puntledge Park
École Robb Road



GUIDELINES FOR FRENCH IMMERSION

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

Registration Procedure:

- On the registration days, registration forms will be distributed from the school's offices
- Forms are numbered and dated to indicate the order of registration
- Forms need to be filled out and turned in immediately
- Original birth certificate and Care Card needs to be presented to validate registration

Kindergarten Placement:

The principal and other school personnel reserve the right to make modifications to maintain equitable gender and educational balance for each of their kindergarten classes. It is hoped that all requests will be honoured, however there are no guarantees. Your understanding and patience is appreciated. As a rule we have given the first 10 requests for the morning class to students with older siblings in the same school and the first 10 requests for morning class to the students with no siblings in the school. Again, there are no promises, even if some of the parents were very early in line.



SCHOOL DISTRICT # 71 (COMOX VALLEY)

DEFINITION OF IMMERSION PROGRAMS

Immersion programs are offered throughout Canada mainly for students whose first language is not French and who can expect to become functionally bilingual by the end of grade 12 without loss of attainment in other subject areas or personal and social growth.

These programs should not be confused with Core French programs, as the instructional time, materials and student expectations are quite different. As an alternative educational program in the Comox Valley School District, French Immersion is offered in two elementary schools and one secondary school.

As you are aware there have been some changes to the district's grade configuration and the location of the Secondary French Immersion Program will be determined shortly.

Curriculum and instructional guides are provided by the B.C. Ministry of Education, and the French materials parallel those in English as closely as possible except for French Language Arts. Instructional staff is fluent in the French language and are usually specialists in their grade level of instruction and/or subject areas.

The District underlines the importance of completing, to the grade 12 level, the Immersion program chosen in elementary school. It further acknowledges the abundance of research supporting this continuity.

Early Immersion

- Entry is at the Kindergarten level - exceptional cases will be considered for grade level entry
- 100% instruction is in French (Kindergarten - Grade 3) and English Language Arts begins in Grade 4.
- Grades 4-7 80% of instruction in French & 20% of instruction in English

What is Immersion?

Immersion is the most effective method known for teaching a second language. Early immersion works well because a young child lacks self-consciousness, prejudice and negativism...and loves mimicry, memorization and repetition. Early immersion provides more time working in a second language...and more time results in additional learning.

In kindergarten the teacher addresses the class in French, although the children often continue to use English, especially among themselves. By the end of the year children are able to recognize a large vocabulary and are attempting to use single words and a few short sentences. They are able to follow the teacher's instructions and to understand simple stories.

In Grade 1 all instruction, including reading, writing and mathematics, is given in French. Speaking skills receive greater emphasis and the children get better and better at expressing themselves in French. They are usually speaking only French in the classroom by December.

The aim of early immersion is functional bilingualism. Graduates are able to communicate comfortably in the second language while maintaining the same fluency with their peers in standard English programs.

An important key to success is a positive attitude in the home toward the language and the program.



The Kindergarten Day

The Kindergarten day respects that five-year-old children learn best through hands-on experience. The day is not separated in various blocks of time, each dedicated to learning a different subject. Rather, the children participate in a variety of activities in various subject areas; Language, Math, Science, Art Drama, Music, all revolving around a theme such as *'bears, colours, or special occasions'*.

Learning is more relevant to children when it builds upon what they already know. Each child in the class comes with unique experiences and areas of expertise. The teacher keeps these differences in mind when planning the curriculum. By nature the integrated day is flexible and open-ended. The teacher also includes a variety of hands-on activities because that is how five-year-olds learn best.

In kindergarten the day is broken up into large blocks of time. Activities from all curriculum strands are integrated into various activities throughout the day.

The following is a sample of what is included in a Kindergarten day:

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Calendar activities | Centres |
| Choosing time | Recess |
| Snack | Seat Work Activities |
| Physical Education | Library Time |
| Computer Technology | Songs |
| Story Telling | Oral Activities |



Frequently Asked Questions

Does it matter if no one at home speaks French?

No, the program was designed for children of non-French speaking families. Teachers are aware of this, so letters home and report cards will be in English.

Will my child learn the same things as students in English classes?

Yes, the curriculum follows the guidelines outlined by the B.C. Ministry of Education. Materials in French cover the same program as students taking English; students work toward the same academic goals regardless of the language of instruction.

Shouldn't some sort of screening take place?

The only children found to be very poor candidates for immersion are those with a poor sense of auditory discrimination or auditory memory. In almost all cases, this is apparent to the kindergarten teacher and a change can be made before Grade 1. For those children who may have difficulty learning to read in French, it is generally the actual reading skills that these children have trouble with, not the language. Learning assistance is available in French, and these children should be able to remain in the Immersion Program.

Who teaches the program?

The district looks for bilingual teacher whose first language is French or who has acquired fluency in the French language. There are programs at many universities, which train immersion teachers.

What if my child wants to go to the bathroom or is injured and they cannot communicate in French?

All teachers speak English and, if necessary, do so in an emergency.

What type of accent will my child have?

Standard French vocabulary and structures are taught. A variety of accents exist in all languages; during a school career a child will be exposed to teachers from various parts of the world that are models of well-spoken French.

Won't my child's English spelling suffer?

Although there are certain lags in English Language Arts for the first few years of the program, these are almost all made up during the first year that subject is introduced. By the end of the elementary grades, immersion students frequently perform better than children in the regular program on several aspects of measured English skills.

What if other children in the family are not in immersion?

Common problems are transportation or participation in after school activities. However, if the family recognizes that different programs are equally valid for each child, then even those problems should not be a major concern. Often a younger child in immersion stimulates an interest in French for all members of the family.

Are extracurricular activities in French necessary?

No, but desirable. Such activities provide other language models for the child to copy, demonstrate that French is a living language and provide an opportunity for the child to practice and expand vocabulary in a non-structured setting.

What if we're transferred to another district or province?

French Immersion is available in most urban centres of Canada and is spreading to many smaller school districts. The CPF National website at www.cpf.ca has a Guide to French Immersion Programs across Canada. A child transferring out of immersion very early - before English language arts are introduced - may experience a brief lag in this subject. Consultation with the new teacher and some work at home overcomes this problem very quickly.

Will French immersion affect my child's social development?

Studies have proven that early immersion students suffer no intellectual, emotional, or social impairment. While they might tend to associate more with their classmates on the playground, this is typical of all children. They develop the same sense of Canadian identity, as do children in the regular English program. They attend Brownies, Cubs, swimming lessons, and birthday parties with their friends in their own neighbourhood as well as with their classmates.

Where could I find adult courses so I can improve my knowledge of French?

Your local CPF Chapter frequently organizes French conversation classes particularly suited for French immersion parents. The Francophone Association, has in past years offered evening courses for parents whose children are enrolled in a French Immersion Program.

Will the other children in my child's class already speak French?

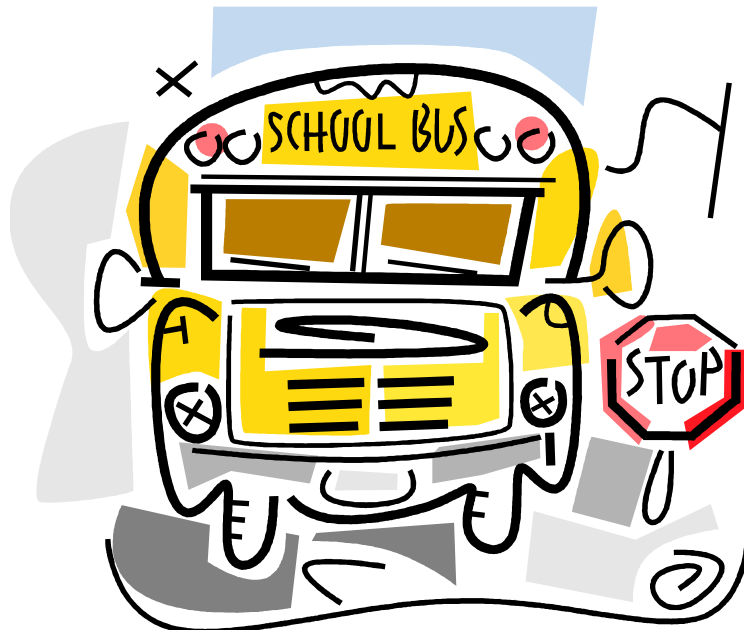
Probably not. The majority of students at French immersion schools come from Anglophone families. Their parents, for the most part, are supportive, unilingual, Anglophone parents.

How will my child learn French?

Your child will be immersed in a new language. The process is natural and imitates the process your child went through to learn English (or any other first language). Songs will be sung; games will be played and a great deal will be learned. Often children do not realize that they are indeed learning a different language. Children quickly learn strategies such as pointing to objects, repeating new words and asking what words mean.

Is transportation to and from school available?

There is no school bus service for the French Immersion program.



WHERE ARE FRENCH RESOURCES AVAILABLE LOCALLY?

SCHOOL LIBRARY: Books, videos, kits (books and tape). Consult our Library Clerk

PUBLIC LIBRARY: Books, videos, audiotapes, CDs

CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH:

CPF is an organization of mainly English speaking parents from all across the country. They are a valuable resource for parents as they value the French language as an integral part of Canada and are dedicated to creating, supporting and promoting opportunities for young people to learn and use French as a second language. For more information please check out their website: <http://www.cpf.bc.ca/bc>

FRANCOPHONE ASSOCIATION:

This organization has a video library, catalogues (for ordering books, software, etc.) courses (for English parents and French speaking). French programs (for pre-school and older children), Homework Club (Club Jeunesse) for children. Give them a call at 334-8884 or drop in at 1491 McPhee, Unit 2, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 3A3.

FRENCH CLASSES FOR PARENTS:

French Language classes are offered through Coordonnatrice de la francisation familiale, French for Parents Workshops Continuing Education: 1-866-266-6613.

BOOK STORES:

Blue Heron Books, Comox (they have a growing French section), Avon Store, Comox Mall (some books and videos), Laughing Oyster, Courtenay.

VIDEOS/DVD:

Comox Videos 'n More; good selection for children and family videos to rent

INFORMATION AND INSPIRATION **FOR FRENCH IMMERSION PARENTS**

Yes, You Can Help was written by experienced immersion parents and published by Alberta Education. In 1997 it was revised for a Canada-wide audience. A resource from kindergarten to high school graduation, this 150 page book includes:

- ✓ Why Immersion started and how it works,
- ✓ What the research says about early and late immersion,
- ✓ How to help your child even if you don't know French,
- ✓ Learning difficulties and French Immersion,
- ✓ What to expect in the secondary years,
- ✓ French opportunities and resources,
- ✓ Where to get more information, and much, much more

Just \$8.50 & shipping & GST, Order No. 479693 *Yes, You Can Help!* - Revised editions
from: Learning Resources Distributing Centre, 12360 - 142 Street
Edmonton, AB T5L 4X9
Phone (780) 427-5775, Fax (780) 422-9750
Email: lrccustserv@gov.ab.ca

| The successful student in French Immersion | The unsuccessful student in French Immersion |
|--|---|
| ▪ Is verbal, likes to talk | ▪ is often a reluctant speaker |
| ▪ imitates easily | ▪ imitates with difficulty |
| ▪ self-corrects | ▪ doesn't notice errors |
| ▪ experiments without fear of making mistakes | ▪ often fears making mistakes |
| ▪ is exposed to many models of good modeling (at home, in the community and in school) | ▪ poor modeling environment (at home, in the community and in school) |
| ▪ readily accepts challenges | ▪ has a defeatist attitude |
| ▪ shows strengths in first language | ▪ often has poor first language skills |
| ▪ trusts | ▪ mistrusts |
| ▪ is usually attentive and focussed | ▪ often is inattentive and unfocussed |
| ▪ is willing | ▪ is often unwilling |
| ▪ has good auditory discrimination | ▪ has poor auditory discrimination |
| ▪ has good memory and good meta-cognitive awareness | ▪ has poor memory and poor meta-cognitive awareness |
| ▪ has determined parental support and convinced parents | ▪ often has unconvinced parents, and unprepared or unwilling to help |

HOW TO SUPPORT THE FRENCH IMMERSION STUDENT AT HOME

All students require parental support in regard to their education. This is particularly true for immersion students. They should experience fun exposure to French outside of the classroom as much as possible.

How can I as a unilingual, Anglophone parent help my child in immersion?

- provide French books, music and games
- encourage your child to watch French TV and listen to French radio (even if it is only for a few minutes)
- participate in exchanges
- attend a French summer camp
- seek out French performances
- find a French speaking penpal

Things to consider:

- don't expect your child to begin speaking French overnight. Learning English took time and support, and so will French.
- Parents do not require a mastery of French. Your interest and support will be far more important than your accent and ability to conjugate verbs.
- If you cannot help your child with their French, bear in mind that you can still help with the learning of the content material.
- Asking your child to "perform" for friends and relatives may inhibit your child as this is not an authentic situation
- Your child is developing a global understanding and will initially have difficulty translating word for word

Your child's teacher will, no doubt, play a big role in your child's life. However, you must keep in mind that your child will only be with the teacher for two and half hours, five times a week. As parents you spend more time with your child and thus play a very important role in your child's education as well.

Reading

Study after study indicates that reading to children on a regular basis, beginning at a young age, is the best basis for success in school. Whether you read in French or English is unimportant as the skills used in reading transfer easily from one language to another. In no way will reading to your child in English interfere with the work being done at school or otherwise cause confusion.

- select both fiction and non-fiction to read together
- allow your child to participate in the selection of books
- allow your child to see how much you value and enjoy reading (both mother and father)
- make reading a priority
- read anything and everything: signs, cards, team logos, cookbooks, junk mail...

At Home Activities to Teach Reading Skills

Key Thoughts:

- Keep it light and fun
- Do it for a short period of time (5 to 10 minutes)
- Use the "you show and the child copies" technique
- Give lots of praise, even just for copying
- A few minutes a day can work miracles

Rhyming Skill

- a) orally rhyming poems and stories with your child.
 - talk about which words rhyme
 - for familiar books, have child volunteer the second rhyming word in each pair
- b) play "I Spy" with rhyme
 - I spy something that rhymes with wall and is red (ball)
- c) play nonsense rhyme games
 - choose an ending like ing
 - take turns putting a new sound on the front (sing, wing, king, ling, ning)
 - initially have your child use the first sound in their own name (Patrick - "p" sound - ping)

Letter Sounds/First Sound of Words

- place an alphabet (preferably upper and lower case) up in a prominent place in your home (child's room or playroom)
- show the child which letter says "m" for mom and have the child physically go and touch that letter
- say the letter sound rather than the letter name
- add other letters i.e. "d" for dad, "h" for Harry, "k" for Katie
- use people's names that are meaningful to your child and praise a lot!
- add favorite toys "f" for fire engine, "l" for Lego
- review a lot, and praise what's remembered and reteach what's forgotten
- slowly work up until you have covered the whole alphabet
- magnetic letters (upper or lower case, or both) and put them, correct way up, on your fridge.
- while you are busy in the kitchen, ask your child to find the letter that says "m" for mom (again, use the sound, not the letter name) (show your child when you first begin).
- have them find a second letter by sound (i.e. "b" for Ben) and then have them select from between these two letters for your subsequent questions.
- use a variety of words for each of these two sounds and try to make it meaningful (which letter says "m" for macaroni, which letter says "b" for bread, which letter says "m" for milk, etc.)
- orally read books with alliteration (repeated use of a sound) for example: Silly Skinny Snakes Slither; and draw your child's attention to the first letter in each work of text
- have fun repeating the words together
- play "I Spy" with letter sounds (use the sound rather than the letter name)

Television

Make French television part of your child's routine. Even watching for a few minutes a day will reap rewards. Allow your child to decide how long to watch for - and this may be very short to begin with - and do not expect your child to understand everything as the learning has just begun.

Toys

Children's favourite toys tend to be those that stimulate their imagination and teach them something while they have fun. Some recommendations are Concentration, Lego, Card Games, Letter and Number Recognition Games.

Other games that are inexpensive - or even free - and spark children's imaginations are old scraps of boxes, paper, plastic containers, wood, wool, cork...These allow children to build and create.

Sleep

Particularly at the beginning of the year, the children may find the day long. Remember that they are learning a new language at the same time as they are learning other things. This requires extra concentration on their part which can be tiring. It is important that they come to school wide awake and ready to learn. It is recommended that children get 10-12 hours of sleep every night. A suggested bed time is between 8 and 8:30.

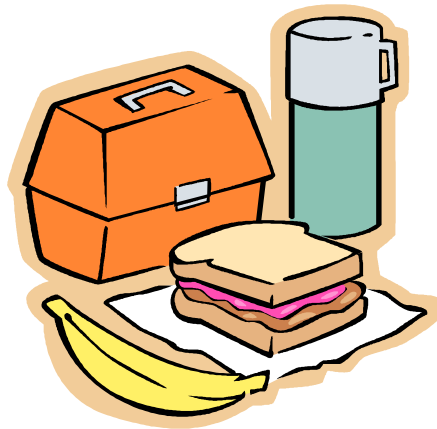
Nutrition

Every day the children eat their snack that they bring from home. We encourage healthy snacks: low in sugar and fat. We have many students with extreme allergies to **NUTS**. Both schools are "**NUT AWARE SCHOOLS**", in order to provide a safe environment for children with serious, life-threatening nut allergies. This does not limit you to carrot sticks! Here are some favourite, healthy snacks of Kindergarten children:

veggies and dip
cheese and crackers
sandwiches

popcorn
cheese strings
yogurt

fruit
cold pizza



Talking to Kids about Their Day

As a parent you are interested in your child's play day at school, and your child will enjoy talking about the day's events. In order to start a good discussion about the day, ask questions that require more than a one word answer. Saying, "Tell me what centres you were allowed to pick from today", will furnish much more information than: "How was your day?" It will be tempting to quiz your child for new French vocabulary each day. Please resist the temptation. The children are not learning vocabulary in isolation. The children understand words in context and initially receive a lot of support with gesturing from the teacher. Instead, ask your child to sing some of the new songs being learned. This will both reassure you and boost your child's confidence.

Helping Children become Self-Reliant

Children seem to grow up so quickly and we often have an impulse to hold on to them in an attempt to keep them dependant upon us. Five-year-olds enjoy the responsibility and independence that is part of going to school. They enjoy being the teacher's helper and being able to do the same things as the other "big kids" at school. Resist the temptation to do too much for your child. Here are some small jobs that your child might enjoy doing at home for you:

- dressing themselves for school
- putting on and tying their shoes
- putting on coats and zipping and buttoning
- carrying their own back packs to and from school
- keeping their room clean
- putting their toys away
- helping to prepare meals
- clearing dishes after dinner



HOW PARENTS CAN HELP AT SCHOOL

Both the children and the teacher are thrilled to have parents helping in the class. Parental volunteers enrich the program in countless ways. September is generally a time for the children to learn the routines associated with being in school and this is more easily accomplished if the teacher is alone with the children. A sign-up sheet will appear in October and stay until June. Your help is greatly appreciated. Parents without French can be of great help in the class and you will learn along the way.

Parents can help in the following ways:

- reading to children in French or English
- helping with Arts and Crafts
- cooking
- coloring and painting
- making booklets
- decorating bulletin boards
- playing with children
- supervising during special events
- sharing expertise
- driving for field trips

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND HOME

Children thrive at school when there is open dialogue between the school and the home. It is important for you to know about the events happening at school so we will communicate with you through a number of forms both formal and informal.

The school publishes a monthly newsletter that will keep you up to date on all the happenings.

Class newsletters will be sent home from your child's teacher on a regular basis, weekly or bi-monthly. These will notify you of upcoming events, and provide you with French vocabulary, songs, and further suggestions on how to support the learning going on in the classroom.

Often when you are picking up or dropping off your child, the teacher may chat with you about your child's progress or the day's events. Alternately, the teacher may send home a note or call in the evening. We try to touch base with all parents occasionally.

Three formal, written reports are sent home each year as well as two informal reporting sessions. The report will comment on progress made in all curriculum areas. The first informal reporting session takes place in November (generally). This is a time for us to sit down together, review the report and further discuss your child's progress. This will be followed by the first written report towards the end of November. It is important for communication between home and school to be two way. Please do not hesitate to contact the teacher or the office when the need arises. The second informal report is usually given mid way through the second term. The second formal written report comes prior to Spring Break and the last formal report at the end of the school year in June.



Should your child require medication while at school then please notify the office so correct procedures can be laid out and the proper forms are filled in. You will be given many forms to fill out when you register your child. It is important that you indicate any medical conditions your child has.



Children entering Kindergarten should have completed their inoculations and vaccinations. Check with the Comox Valley Health Unit if you are unsure.



CHILD SAFETY @ SCHOOL AND @ HOME

It is important that home and school work together to keep children safe. While safety is taught in the classroom, it is important the messages learned at school be reinforced at home.

Use of Crosswalks and Sidewalks

Review with your child the correct way to use both crosswalks and sidewalks.

Home Phone Numbers

While the office has a list of your phone numbers, it is an excellent idea for every child to memorize theirs. Often numbers change, it is important to keep the office and your child's teacher aware of any changes

Home Address

Again, the office has this information but it is important for your child to know it too. If your child ever gets lost, this will greatly help police to quickly reunite you with your child.

When and How to use 911

Everyone should know the 911 emergency numbers. It is important that children be taught what an emergency is so that they know when they should phone it. They also need to be able to tell the operator if they need the fire department, ambulance or police.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

It is very important for young children to learn how to keep themselves safe. At school we practice both fire and earthquake drills. We stress the importance of practicing in order to be prepared. It would be a good idea to discuss these with your child and practice your own drills at home. We make sure that both the morning and afternoon class have the opportunity to practice both the fire and earthquake drills.

