



MEMORANDUM

April 9, 2024
 Regular Board Meeting

TO Board of Trustees

FROM Shauna Boyce, Superintendent

ORIGINATOR Scott Johnston, Associate Superintendent

RESOURCE Linda Madge-Arkininstall, Division Principal, Literacy and Lifelong Learning
 Shaye Patras, Division Principal, Numeracy and Achievement

GOVERNANCE POLICY Board Policy 1: Division Foundational Statements
 Board Policy 2: Role of the Board
 Board Policy 12: Role of the Superintendent

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE BP 1: Vision, Foundational Statements
 BP 2: Education Planning and Programming
Education Act: 19-23, 33, 196-197

SUBJECT **FRENCH IMMERSION REPORT**

PURPOSE

For information. No recommendation required.

BACKGROUND

The Board is charged with the responsibility of providing, for its students and their parents, an education system organized and operated in the students’ best interests. It exercises this responsibility through setting of local educational policy and the wise use of resources. Within Alberta’s French immersion programs of study, students learn to communicate effectively in French across various situations through reading, writing, listening, speaking, and analyzing texts. By engaging with diverse materials from around the world, they gain exposure to different cultures and viewpoints, enhancing their understanding of the global Francophone community. This program fosters open-mindedness, a sense of belonging, and appreciation of Canada's linguistic diversity, while promoting the personal and cognitive benefits of bilingualism or multilingualism.

REPORT SUMMARY

This French Immersion Report provides an overview of the successes and challenges that contribute to our current student performance in French Immersion.

Administration would be pleased to respond to any questions.

SJ:kz



PARKLAND
SCHOOL DIVISION

INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES: FRENCH IMMERSION REPORT

APRIL, 2024

Presented to the Board of Trustees, April 9, 2024

Scott Johnston, Associate Superintendent, Education and System Services

Resources: Linda Madge-Arkininstall, Division Principal, Literacy and Lifelong Learning, and

Shaye Patras, Division Principal, Numeracy and Achievement

Our Students Possess the confidence, resilience, insight and skills required to thrive in, and positively impact, the world.

BACKGROUND

Our students' ability to access a supportive and meaningful French Immersion program supports the Division's Mission: Our core values of excellence in achievement and our learning opportunities that are purposeful, essential, relevant, authentic, and responsive live daily within our French Immersion Programs.

As French is one of Canada's two official languages, learning French is considered important to enhance opportunities for living and working throughout Canada and the world, as well as to foster a greater understanding between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians. Alberta Education encourages opportunities for all Alberta students to learn French by making available alternative French language programs such as French immersion and French as a second language courses. (Alberta Education, 2024).

As a Program of Choice within Parkland School Division, French Immersion not only facilitates the development of highly proficient oral and written French skills but also offers a rich immersion experience in French culture.

FRENCH IMMERSION IN PARKLAND SCHOOL DIVISION

As outlined in the table below, PSD grade 6 students achieved below the Provincial Average on all Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) at both the Acceptable Standard and the Standard of Excellence in both the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. Additionally, PSD saw a decline year over year in the percentage of students achieving the Acceptable Standard in English Language Arts, Sciences, and Études Sociales. PSD did see an increase in the percentage of Grade 6 students achieving the Acceptable Standard year over year in French Language Arts and Mathématiques.

As outlined in the table below, PSD grade 9 students achieved below the Provincial average on all Provincial Achievement Tests in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years with the exception of English Language Arts in 2022-23 where PSD exceeded the Province by 2.4%. Additionally, PSD gr 9 students achieved below the provincial average at the Standard of Excellence in all subjects during both the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years, with the exception of French Language Arts in 2021-22 where PSD exceeded the province by 0.8%.

PSD grade 9 students demonstrated improvement year over year at the Acceptable Standard in English Language Arts, French Language Arts, Mathématiques and Sciences.

PROVINCIAL ACHIEVEMENT TESTS								
	2021-2022				2022-2023			
	PSD		AB		PSD		AB	
	Acceptable %	Excellence %	Acceptable %	Excellence %	Acceptable %	Excellence %	Acceptable %	Excellence %
English Language Arts 6	90.8	25.4	95.9	28.6	86.1	8.9	95.6	29.6
French Language Arts 6	55.7	1.9	76.9	10.6	64.2	0.9	77.6	12.5
Mathématiques 6	62.6	8.1	77.5	15.2	71.7	8.5	78.0	17.6
Sciences 6	53.0	8.0	73.3	15.9	50.0	2.8	67.3	12.8
Études Sociales 6	46.0	6.0	66.5	12.5	34.9	1.9	64.3	11.6
English Language Arts 9	95.5	16.7	95.7	24.2	98.5	13.2	96.2	26.9
French Language Arts 9	61.3	10.7	73.5	9.9	74.3	7.1	76.1	10.9
Mathématiques 9	44.0	14.7	71.4	23.9	49.3	5.8	71.7	20.8
Sciences 9	62.2	13.5	78.7	22.0	62.9	10.0	78.7	20.3
Études Sociales 9	59.5	17.6	74.2	19.5	54.3	7.1	69.5	15.7

TEACHING AND LEADING: STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR IMPROVED RESULTS

In our commitment to improving French Immersion learning outcomes, Instructional Services has implemented intentional strategic approaches. This involves continuous collaboration between school administration and Instructional Services, resulting in several key initiatives:

- French Immersion Language Arts and Literature [FILAL] and Numeracy Results Review: We conduct reviews of literacy and numeracy results with each school, collaboratively determining professional development plans to address specific needs.
- Literacy and Numeracy Screens in French: Implementation of screens to inform programming and to target instruction for French Immersion students.
- FILAL and Numeracy Lead Teachers: Designated Literacy and Numeracy Leads in schools, initiated in the 2021-2022 school year, continue to meet as a cohort, focusing on literacy and numeracy topics, sharing insights with their respective staff on professional development days and supporting colleagues' instruction within classrooms.
- French Immersion Resource Development: A lead French Immersion working group was formed, creating resources such as a French phonological awareness screen, GB+ reading targets, and a French Immersion reading behavior checklist guide for teachers.
- Division-Wide Writing Rubrics and Writing Scope and Sequence: We collaborate to develop French writing rubrics for grades K-4.
- Division-Wide Resources: Collaboration with administration and literacy and numeracy lead teachers resulted in the creation of centralized literacy resources within each school, facilitating easy access to school-wide research-based resources.

Identification and alignment of Numeracy and Science resources (such as *Idello*) in the French language have been a focus of this work.

- Professional Development Sessions in French: Accessing French-speaking facilitators through our regional consortia has enhanced the professional learning opportunities offered to our teachers and has supported our teachers' language skills.
- Allocation of Additional Funding: Acknowledging the challenge of ensuring adequate teaching and student resources for French Immersion programs has resulted in additional funding being provided to French Immersion schools to support curriculum implementation.
- French Language Assistants: Accessing grant funding through the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP) to provide one French Language Assistant to each of Ecole Broxton Park School, Ecole Meridian Heights School, and Spruce Grove Composite School has supported the language development of our students.
- Allocation of Additional Learning Loss Funding: Acknowledging the unique challenges faced by immersion learners through remote learning during the COVID pandemic has resulted in additional learning loss funding being provided to schools for French Immersion students.

These initiatives demonstrate our dedication to strategic planning and ongoing efforts to enhance French Immersion programming within Parkland School Division.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

Parkland School Division continues to experience challenges within our French Immersion program that we are working to address.

Staffing:

- Hiring qualified French Immersion teachers is an ongoing challenge for PSD. The average number of applicants for French Immersion job postings within PSD in the 2023-24 school year was 12. Alternatively, the average number of applicants for job postings in similar schools within Spruce Grove (Copperhaven School was used as a comparable) and Stony Plain (Westview as a comparable) was 62 applicants;
- An insufficient number of substitute teachers are qualified to teach in French Immersion classrooms. This shortage further complicates the ability to provide a truly immersive language experience for our students. Currently there are 347 substitute teachers on the PSD sub list, with 31 indicating that they will substitute for a French Immersion teacher; however, several of these 31 substitute teachers do not speak French;
- Some teachers, hired within our French Immersion programs, may lack pre-service training in second language instruction; and
- As shown in the chart below, Campus St. Jean (the francophone campus of the University of Alberta) has also experienced a decline in enrollment.

Campus St. Jean – Student Enrollment Data					
Elementary			Secondary		
2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
197	186	155	112	105	100

While enrolment levels are beginning to stabilize post-COVID, French Immersion registration has seen a decline from pre-COVID levels. School Administration reports a decrease in the number of kindergarten cohorts at both École Broxton Park School & École Meridian Heights School. Pre-COVID École Broxton Park School and École Meridian Heights School report having 4 cohorts of Kindergarten students, as opposed to the current 3 and 2 cohorts respectively.

PSD FRENCH IMMERSION ENROLLMENT						
Grade	École Broxton Park		École Meridian Heights		Spruce Grove Composite High	
	2022-2023	2023-2024	2022-2023	2023-2024	2022-2023	2023-2024
K	63	59	34	33	-	-
1	86	61	41	34	-	-
2	72	84	41	41	-	-
3	65	60	44	41	-	-
4	48	60	49	41	-	-
5	63	49	39	46	-	-
6	65	63	39	34	-	-
7	56	69	40	35	-	-
8	50	51	32	39	-	-
9	31	43	42	30	-	-
10	-	-	-	-	49	45
11	-	-	-	-	49	42
12	-	-	-	-	31	47
Total	599	599	371		129	134

- We note an increase in students transitioning out of French Immersion into English language programming in grades 4-6.
 - Administration speculates that this is a lingering result of the struggles that French Immersion students and parents faced in online learning during COVID.
- Administration at Ecole Meridian Heights School and Ecole Broxton Park School have indicated that there may be several “pull factors” that contribute to Grade 9 French Immersion students choosing to leave the program in Grade 10. Students attending French Immersion at EMHS report that transitioning to Memorial Composite High School provides several benefits including:
 - Remaining with friends;
 - Staying within the community of Stony Plain;

- Receiving programming in English, which can be an easier academic experience; and
- Reducing travel time to school, especially for those who live in the west-end communities, such as Duffield, Wabamun, Entwistle, and Tomahawk.

Additional perceptions:

- School feedback received from parents indicates that there are misconceptions about immersion programs and the school's role in supporting their children as French Immersion learners;
- Similar to English stream classes within Parkland School Division, French Immersion classrooms are seeing an increase in the complexity of the needs of students. This can pose additional challenges in an immersion setting as students are not receiving support in the language of instruction at home; and
- A limited ability to provide language instruction during COVID has proven challenging in French Immersion settings. After receiving only 1 hour/day of instruction in the French language during remote learning, students returned to their classrooms with lagging language skills. This has led to questions from parents as to why their children in French Immersion classrooms may have to be working harder than their English-streamed peers.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

Parkland School Division French Immersion programs experienced success in the following areas:

- Starting in the 2023-24 academic year, Spruce Grove Composite High School (SGCHS) offered a science course in French. Additionally, for the 2024-25 school year, Biology 20 will be available in French;
- Students enrolled in the French Immersion program in High School will have the opportunity in 2024-25 to take Biology 20, French Language Arts, Sciences, and Études Sociales;
- Staff are actively focusing on small group literacy and numeracy targeted instruction;
- French Language Assistants were provisioned to provide targeted language work with students;
- Providing Professional Learning opportunities in French for PSD French Immersion teachers serves to strengthen the language skills of our teachers; notably, this is extremely well received by these teachers;
- A small working group of French Immersion teachers collaborates to focus on writing rubrics and resources;
- Collaboration with other school divisions allows for sharing of resources, pacing guides and scope and sequence documents;
- Cultural activities such as 'Francophète', trips to Quebec, French Musicians and performers all continue to build our students' appreciation for French Culture. Similarly, trips to France and Normandy for French Immersion High School students

allow our students to experience French culture and build their language skills in an authentic setting;

- French Immersion resources are available from the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia [ARPDC], and staff members are exploring and implementing the resources; and
- Many Parkland School Divisions French Immersion graduate students have continued their education at Campus St Jean, with some returning to serve as teachers within our school communities.