



MEMORANDUM

March 11, 2025
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



INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES: FRENCH IMMERSION REPORT

MARCH 11, 2025

Presented to the Board of Trustees, March 11, 2025

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

Parkland School Division's mission to create supportive learning environments, offer meaningful experiences, and foster healthy relationships is deeply embedded in our French Immersion programs. These programs reflect our core values of excellence, providing purposeful, relevant, and responsive learning opportunities that inspire resilience, broaden perspectives, and contribute to lasting success.

As one of Canada's two official languages, French plays a vital role in enhancing opportunities for individuals to live and work across Canada and around the world. It also strengthens understanding between French 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 course. (Alberta Education, 2024).

Within Parkland School division, French Immersion is a program of Choice that not only fosters the development of strong oral and written French Skills but also immerses students in the richness of French culture, offering a comprehensive bilingual experience.

FRENCH IMMERSION IN PARKLAND SCHOOL DIVISION

As outlined in the table below, PSD grade 6 students showed significant growth in the 2023-24 school year. PAT results indicate strong growth year over year in all tests administered. Additionally, PSD students exceeded the provincial average at the acceptable standard in French Language Arts and closed the gap to province significantly in Sciences, while work remains in *Études Sociales* with PSD students continuing to lag behind the province by a significant margin at the acceptable standard.

As outlined in the table below, PSD Grade 9 students also showed significant year-over-year growth at the Acceptable Standard in all Provincial Achievement Tests, except for English Language Arts, which declined by 4.1%. These gains are helping close the gap to the provincial average; however, PSD students remain below the provincial average in all subjects except French Language Arts.

PROVINCIAL ACHIEVEMENT TESTS								
	2022-2023				2023-2024			
	PSD		AB		PSD		AB	
	Acceptable %	Excellence %	Acceptable %	Excellence %	Acceptable %	Excellence %	Acceptable %	Excellence %
English Language Arts 6	86.1	8.9	95.6	29.6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
French Language Arts 6	64.2	0.9	77.6	12.5	80.3	8.2	69.9	9.3
Mathématiques 6	71.7	8.5	78.0	17.6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sciences 6	50.0	2.8	67.3	12.8	67.2	13.1	69.5	17.2
Études Sociales 6	34.9	1.9	64.3	11.6	51.1	7.4	67.1	12.2
English Language Arts 9	98.5	13.2	96.2	26.9	94.4	20.8	95.4	23.1
French Language Arts 9	74.3	7.1	76.1	10.9	83.6	2.7	76.6	10.6
Mathématiques 9	49.3	5.8	71.7	20.8	58.9	13.7	72.5	10.6
Sciences 9	62.9	10.0	78.7	20.3	68.5	4.1	79.6	19.3
Études Sociales 9	54.3	7.1	69.5	15.7	67.1	6.8	67.9	14.5

**Based on students enrolled*

***As per Alberta Education directives, Provincial Achievement Tests were not administered for Math and English Language Arts in grade 6 in the 2023-24 school year.*

TEACHING AND LEADING: STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR IMPROVED RESULTS

In our ongoing commitment to strengthening French Immersion learning outcomes, Instructional Services has adopted a range of strategic, collaborative approaches. These initiatives foster continuous engagement between school administration and Instructional Services, driving key actions across the division:

- Review of French Immersion Literacy and Numeracy Outcomes: We actively engage with each school to assess literacy and numeracy results, collaboratively identifying professional development needs and shaping targeted plans to enhance student outcomes.
- French Literacy and Numeracy Screening: The implementation of screening tools in French allows us to gather essential data, informing curriculum decisions and helping to tailor instruction for French Immersion students.
- Designated Literacy and Numeracy Leads: Introduced in the 2021-2022 school year, Literacy and Numeracy Leads continue to meet regularly, focusing on key topics to guide professional development and support classroom instruction across schools. These leaders share insights with their peers during professional development days, strengthening teaching practices division-wide.
- Development and Procurement of French Immersion Resources: A dedicated working group was established to build and compile resources, including an oral French language continuum. In support of the implementation of the new Science program of studies, PSD teachers are developing curriculum resources in both French and English. These tools equip teachers with effective strategies to support student

learning. Additionally, where possible, French Immersion teachers are provided with resources in French that complement those available in English (e.g. Idello, Mathology etc.).

- Division-Wide French Writing Rubrics: We collaborated across schools to develop French writing rubrics for grades K-9, ensuring clear, consistent criteria for assessing student writing progress.
- Centralized Resources for Literacy and Numeracy: Through collaboration with school administration and lead teachers, we have developed centralized, research-based resources that are readily accessible in each school. Additionally, we are aligning and identifying key Numeracy and Science resources (such as Idello) in the French language to enhance learning opportunities.
- Professional Development in French: We have expanded access to French-language professional development by hiring a French-speaking facilitator and supporting the implementation of the Grades 4-6 curriculum. These efforts enhance teachers' language skills and instructional practices. Additionally, accessing French-speaking facilitators from the local regional professional learning consortium continues to be available to PSD teachers.
- OLEP Hub Project: Parkland School Division French Immersion teachers in grades 1-6 are working collaboratively with several other school divisions across the province on an OLEP Hub Project focused on oral French language acquisition skills. PSD teachers are implementing resources within their classrooms and providing feedback to the developing board. Our contribution to this project ensures high-quality resources are available to French Immersion teachers and students throughout the province while simultaneously providing our teachers with additional instructional resources to support language learning.
- French Language Assistants: In collaboration with the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP), we have secured grant funding to provide French Language Assistants at Ecole Broxton Park School and Ecole Meridian Heights School, further enriching students' language development.

These initiatives reflect our commitment to thoughtful planning and continuous improvement in French Immersion programming within Parkland School Division.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

Parkland School Division continues to face challenges within our French Immersion program which we are actively working to address.

Staffing:

- Recruiting qualified French Immersion teachers remains a persistent challenge for PSD. On average, French Immersion applications received are 20% of those received for a typical role.
- The availability of substitute teachers qualified to teach in French Immersion is limited, making it more difficult to maintain a fully immersive language environment for students. Of the over 300 substitutes available in Parkland School Division, only a small number have indicated a willingness to take on French Immersion assignments; with even fewer of those actually being proficient in the French language.

- Some teachers hired for our French Immersion programs may not have received pre-service training in second-language instruction.

While enrollment levels are beginning to stabilize at the Kindergarten level, French Immersion programming continues to see an overall decline in enrollment in most grades. When tracking cohorts of students this decrease in enrollment becomes apparent.

PSD French Immersion Enrollment									
Gra de	École Broxton Park			École Meridian Heights			Spruce Grove Composite High		
	2022/23	2023-24	2024-25	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
K	63	59	64	34	33	38	-	-	-
1	86	61	62	41	34	28	-	-	-
2	72	84	57	41	41	29	-	-	-
3	65	60	83	44	41	35	-	-	-
4	48	60	52	49	41	37	-	-	-
5	63	49	51	39	46	36	-	-	-
6	65	63	39	39	34	46	-	-	-
7	56	69	58	40	35	28	-	-	-
8	50	51	65	32	39	28	-	-	-
9	31	43	41	42	30	33	-	-	-
10	-	-	-	-	-	-	49	45	58
11	-	-	-	-	-	-	49	42	43
12	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	47	45
Tot al	536	540	508	367	341	300	129	134	

- We continue to see a growing number of students transitioning from French Immersion to English-language programming between Grades 4 and 10. This trend may be partly due to students having greater agency in their educational choices as they mature.
- Several factors influence Grade 9 French Immersion students' decisions to exit the program in Grade 10. At EMHS, students highlight key advantages of transitioning to Memorial Composite High School, including:
 - Staying with their peer group,
 - Remaining within the Stony Plain community,
 - Accessing English programming, which may present fewer academic challenges, and
 - Reducing travel time, especially for students from west-end communities such as Duffield, Wabamun, Entwistle, and Tomahawk.

Additional perceptions:

- Feedback from parents suggests there are misunderstandings about immersion programs and the school's role in supporting students as French Immersion learners.

- Similar to English-stream classrooms in Parkland School Division, French Immersion classrooms are experiencing increasing student needs and complexity. However, immersion settings present additional challenges, as students may not receive language support at home in French.
- The limitations on language instruction during COVID-19 created difficulties for French Immersion students. While these language deficits have been a focus for French Immersion teachers over the past 3 years, with only one hour of daily French instruction during remote learning, many students returned to the classroom with gaps in their language skills. As a result, parents have expressed concerns about why their children in French Immersion may need to put in more effort than their peers in the English stream.

Relevant Contextual Information:

- As illustrated in the chart below, enrollment at Campus St. Jean, the francophone campus of the University of Alberta, has recently seen a significant increase. While this is only a recent development, it is an encouraging sign.

Campus St. Jean – Student Enrollment Data							
Elementary				Secondary			
2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
197	186	155	261	112	105	100	203

ACHIEVEMENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

Parkland School Division French Immersion programs have achieved success in several key areas:

- Teachers continue to grow their ability to program using small-group instruction in literacy and numeracy to support student learning;
- French Language Assistants are providing targeted language support to enhance students' oral language proficiency;
- Professional learning opportunities offered in French have been well received by PSD French Immersion teachers, strengthening their instructional practices;
- A dedicated group of French Immersion teachers have worked collaboratively to develop an oral language continuum from kindergarten to grade 12;
- Resources developed within Parkland School Division are being translated into French during the development stages;
- Ongoing partnerships with other school divisions have facilitated the sharing of resources, pacing guides, scope and sequence documents, and piloting oral language lessons;
- Teachers are integrating a variety of French Immersion resources to enhance instruction and student learning;
- Cultural enrichment opportunities continue to be a strong focus, with students participating in events like *Francofete*, *Vive Le Francais*, and trips to Quebec. This exchange trip to Quebec, a collaboration between both schools, fosters a sense of

community;

- Attendance at Metropolitan Edmonton Regional French Immersion Programs (MERFIP) meetings allows the French Immersion facilitator to stay informed on current trends, collaborate with other divisions, and bring valuable insights back to support teachers and students;
- Participation in Official Languages in Education Programs (OLEP) meetings allows for ongoing collaboration with other districts, promoting shared resources and strengthening the overall French language education community; and
- Engaging with partners from the French Immersion provincial consortium provides opportunities for networking across the province.

High School Strategies and Successes

In an effort to encourage students to remain in a French Immersion program through grade 12, Spruce Grove Composite High School (SGCHS) continues to add to the diversity of courses available to French Immersion students. Currently students can receive programming in:

- French Language Arts 10-1, 10-2, 20-1, 20-2, 30-1 and 30-2
- Etudes Sociales 10-1, 10-2, 20-1, 20-2, 30-1 and 30-2
- Sciences 10
- Biologie 20
- Mathématiques 10C

Spruce Grove Composite High School is exploring additional course offerings including *Mathématiques* 20-1 and 20-2. Additionally, SGCHS is evaluating its French Immersion certification to align with these additional course opportunities with the possibility of two-tiered certificate system. One certificate for those students graduating with 30 credits in French Immersion classes and an alternate certificate for those graduating with 45 credits in French Immersion classes.

Looking Forward

Parkland School Division's French Immersion programs continue to grow through expanded high school course offerings, strengthened instructional practices, and targeted language support. Collaboration among teachers and school divisions has led to the development of a K-12 oral language continuum, resource translation, and shared instructional materials. Cultural experiences and participation in provincial networks further enhance student learning and program development.