

PARENT INFORMATION

INTENSIVE FRENCH

ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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What Exactly is Intensive French?

Intensive French (IF) is a second language teaching approach in which French is taught intensively for most of the day for five months during Grade 6. The students in the program receive about 80% of their instruction in French during the first half of the year and 20% during the second half; the rest of the curriculum (except for Mathematics, Health and Physical Education) is “compressed” into the second half of the year.

The key ingredients for IF success are:

- **Intensity of French instruction**
Students and teacher speak only French during the first half of the year (80% of the day). The focus is on learning to communicate in French and not on other content learning in particular. To this end, students focus on topics that are grouped into relevant and engaging themes. Real-life projects within these themes help students to see the practical value of what they are learning. Instruction concentrates on the oral as well as the writing and reading skills.
- **Time of concentrated exposure**
It has been shown that the most efficient way to learn another language is to spend concentrated time with it. Higher results are achieved with 60 hours concentrated into three weeks with four hours a day, than with 60 hours spread over three months with one hour a day, even though the number of hours is the same.
- **Enriched communicative FSL methodology**
In order to make optimum use of the increased time of French, an enriched curriculum is required. This enrichment is provided through expanding the content of the curriculum, increasing the depth of exploration of topics and adopting a whole language approach to the teaching of French. The curriculum is cognitively demanding and increases in complexity of language use, tasks and knowledge base during the five months. It integrates some information from other subject areas, such as Science (environmental issues), Social Studies (Canadian and world geography, Canadian and world history), and Health (rules for good nutrition).
- **Interactive pedagogy**
Regular use of an interactive pedagogy, such as cooperative learning (working in pairs and small groups) and project-based learning is an essential part of IF. Projects permit students to use language in many different contexts, enabling them to use more types of language functions (explaining, gathering information, asking questions, negotiating meaning) as well as integrating knowledge from different sources using complex language structures. It contributes significantly to the development of cognitive, social and personal capacities as well as the organizational skills of the learner.

What is the Difference?

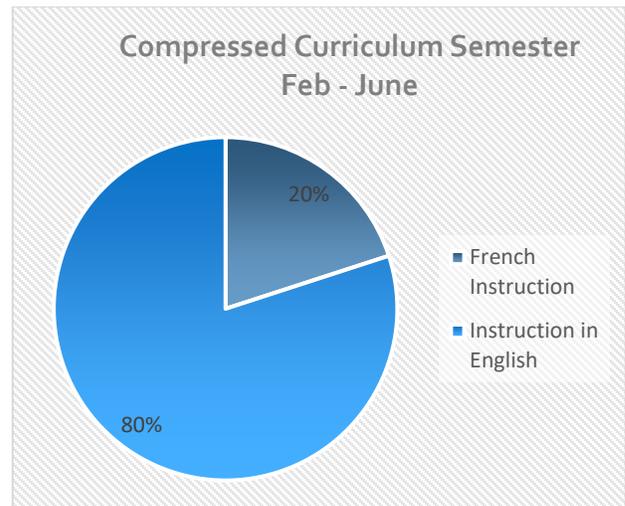
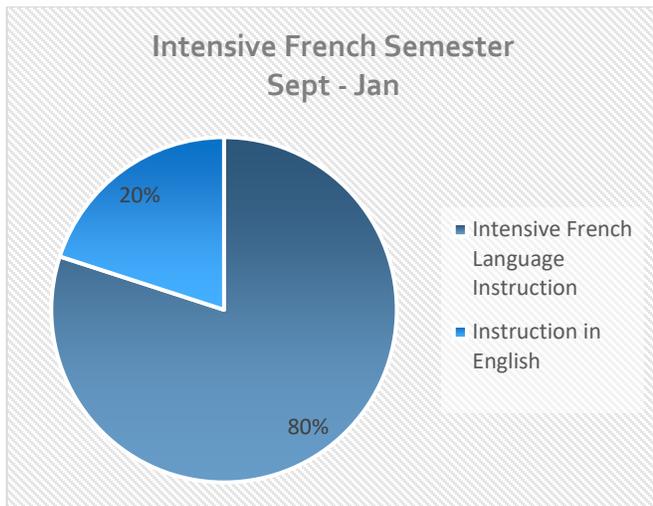
Elementary Core French: is a basic second language program intended to enable students to communicate purposefully in French and develop an openness to cultural diversity. The program is available in elementary schools at the Grade 5 – 7 level offering approximately 100 minutes of instruction per week. Students in Core French have the option of taking French as second language courses throughout secondary programming.

Intensive French: is an intensive French language acquisition program involving a period of intensive exposure to French (80% of one half of the Grade 6 year and 20% for the remaining half). The program continues with strong French instruction in the following years. During their Grade 7 year, students' schedules are arranged to provide regular periods of concentrated French Language programming. Students in the IF program are able to access French second languages courses in secondary school.

French Immersion: is an intensive French language acquisition program with the goal of developing functionally bilingual students through teaching most of the curriculum with French as the language of instruction. The program is offered beginning in Kindergarten (Early French Immersion) or in Grade 6 (Late French Immersion). Students who successfully complete French Immersion graduate with a dual language diploma and take French Immersion courses throughout secondary school programming.

Intensive French Model

Entry Level – Grade 6



* Mathematics, Health, and Physical Education will be taught in English throughout the whole year.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. As parents, do we have to know French?

No, you do not have to know French. This is a program designed for children whose families do not necessarily speak French. The best way to help your child is to support and encourage them in the study of French (watching TV in French, listening to a small book the student would like to read to you, etc.). If you do not speak French, your child may become a more autonomous learner because they will have to call upon friends or look for other sources of help if there are problems with homework or assignments.

2. Will the teacher speak French all the time?

Yes. The use of the English language by the teacher will only occur for a very short period of time at the beginning of the Intensive French program. During the 80% French part of the day, it is essential that students be completely immersed in the language for maximum learning.

3. What happens to the skill level in English?

As the three-year pilot project in Newfoundland has shown, there is no demonstrated negative effect on the level of skills in English. This is because learning a second language, such as French, is an overall literacy experience. In the teaching of Intensive French a language arts approach is adopted. Skills in the areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing are all taught. All the processes involved in the study of these skills in French are transferred into English during the last five months of the school year. In effect, there is an increase in instructional time for language arts and as a result more time is devoted to actual literacy development.

For children whose first language is not English, research conducted in BC has shown that gains in English proficiency are more pronounced for students who take part in Intensive French than those who do not, especially if their proficiency in their first or second languages (home language and English) are already fairly well developed.

4. Do students have extra work to do?

No. Students will not be expected to “do extra work” in order to “cover the curriculum”. The curriculum for the year will be carefully structured to cover all the learning outcomes without increasing the workload. This can be achieved by “integrating” the overlapping learning outcomes, reducing the number of activities used to attain the same learning outcome and focusing on skill transference from one subject to another.

5. What will a student be able to do in French by the end of Grade 6 in IF?

At the end of the school year, where Intensive French is offered, students should, among other things, be able to:

- carry on a general conversation on specific topics;
- write with a reasonable degree of accuracy – for instance, write with or reply to a letter from a friend or write messages to people of their own age;
- ask relatively simple questions;
- read a short, simple novel in French, grasping the general idea; and,
- read simple articles in a newspaper or magazine at an appropriate age and interest level.

The focus of Intensive French is on the learning of French as a means of communication, and not as an academic subject of study.

6. What happens if a student cannot keep up with the French?

French is taught as a means of communication, and not as an object of study. Because curriculum in Intensive French is based mainly on the everyday experiences of students, they learn how to speak about things of interest to them. They become motivated and interested, talking about themselves, their families, their favourite animals, sports they like, films, etc. Anecdotal reports from parents and students show that even students who struggle in academic areas gain more self-confidence and actually improve their literacy skills generally.