

# French Immersion Program Sylvan Lake



The following are a series of frequently asked questions about French Immersion programming in Sylvan Lake schools.

## 1. What does Alberta Education recommend for instructional time in French?

Grades	*Recommended French Instructional time
Kindergarten	100%
1-2	90-100%
3-6	70-80%
7-9	50-80%
9-12	40-80%

*\*Recommended Ranges – these ranges are recommended by Alberta Education, however Alberta Education also recognizes that local factors may influence the time allotted.*

## 2. What does French Immersion look like in Sylvan Lake?

<i>Alberta Education</i>		
Grades	French Instructional time and courses	Milestones (*these are new opportunities that will be implemented in the next 2 years)
Kindergarten	100% École Steffie Woima (all subjects)	
1-2	100% École Steffie Woima	
3-5	70-80% École Steffie Woima (English language arts begins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DELF A1 (end of grade 5) (optional)</li> </ul>
6-8	80% École Fox Run (FLA, Math, Science, Social)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DELF A2 (end of grade 8) (optional)</li> </ul>
9-12	25% HJ Cody <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Currently: (under 10 students/grade)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grade 9 FLA/Social Studies</li> <li>- Grade 10-12 FLA; Grades 10 Social Studies (total of 20 credits)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Future Goal (10 or more students/grade):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grade 9-12 FLA/Social Studies 30-1 (maximum of 30 credits)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DELF B1 (end of grade 9 or end of grade 10 – highly recommended)</li> <li>• DELF B2 (end of grade 12)</li> <li>• CESD issued Bilingual Certificate upon graduation</li> </ul>

### 3. What is DELF? Why would my child take this test?

DELF (*Diplôme d'études en langue française*) is a set of official French Proficiency tests and has now become accepted as a way of benchmarking language ability all over the world. As an official certification of second-language proficiency, DELF tests the ability of students to use French in real-life situations. These tests provide international recognition of French proficiency and life-long certification. As well, these tests help our schools examine their programming and continue to improve upon it. In addition, Universities around the world accept the DELF B2 for entrance into their programs. Many colleges and universities in Canada accept DELF B1 and B2, depending on the program the student is registered for.

These tests are currently being administered in Ontario and in some of the Atlantic provinces and will soon become the standard in Alberta and B.C. Currently Red Deer Public, Red Deer Catholic, Calgary Public, Edmonton Public and Fort McMurray are implementing some of these tests with their French Immersion students.

*\*DELF testing will be piloted in Olds next year with expansion to Sylvan Lake and Innisfail the following year.*

### 4. What are some of the challenges and opportunities of a French Immersion program in Sylvan Lake?

Challenges:	Opportunities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Student attrition between the middle school and the high school.</li> <li>✓ Parents can easily enroll their child outside our community in a program that offers 40 - 80% French Immersion instruction for Grade 9 – 12.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We have administrators who want the program to continue.</li> <li>✓ We have a strong core of teachers currently in place.</li> <li>✓ We have enthusiastic parents who want to see French Immersion succeed.</li> <li>✓ We have support for French Immersion teachers at the district level.</li> <li>✓ We will have 3 teachers across Chinook’s Edge school division trained as assessors for the DELF tests which may be administered within our division. (Olds, Innisfail, Sylvan Lake)</li> </ul>

### 5. Why do we only offer FLA and Social Studies in high school?

Both urban and rural school divisions across the province are experiencing the challenge of maintaining student enrollment at the senior high level in French Immersion. As such, school divisions are making adjustments to French Immersion programming. For example:

- Lacombe Composite High School in Wolf Creek School division offers FLA and Social Studies in high school. Students may substitute credits or take additional credits by taking part in a Work Experience setting which requires French as the primary language (e.g. work experience in the elementary or middle schools).
- Wetaskiwin Composite High School in Wetaskiwin School division uses distance learning materials for grades 10-12 French Immersion.
- Catholic Central high School in Holy Spirit School division offers the following courses based on student need: FLA, Religious Studies, Information processing and CALM.
- Cochrane High School in Rocky View School division offers FLA and Social Studies in grades 10-12.
- École Secondaire Foothills Composite in Foothills School division offers FLA and Social Studies in grades 10-12.
- Wild Rose School division has no high school French Immersion program.

- Living Waters school division (Whitecourt, Edson, Slave Lake) are currently considering reconfiguring their French Immersion program to end at grade 9. Currently they have stand-alone classes K-3 and combined classes in grades 4-9 (4/5; 5/6; 6/7; 8/9).

## 6. Won't my child lose their French language skills if they aren't in French in all of their subjects in high school?

Research on language retention indicates the more a second language is used, the more likely it is to be retained. The research however does not specify the number of hours of instruction for language retention. Factors influencing retention of a second language include:

- proficiency level – this is influenced by quality early programming with 100% of the time being spent immersed in the second language before English is introduced, typically around grade 3
- attitude and motivation towards learning a second language
- opportunity to use a second language formally in school and informally out of school

## 7. How do we make decisions about class size and configuration in Chinook's Edge?

In Chinook's Edge School division we have a process called RAWG (Resource Allocation Working Group) which involves all of our principals, vice principals and superintendents in the allocation of resources across our schools. In terms of staff allocations we have a set of guidelines that help us make decisions. In terms of allocating teaching staff, we strive to achieve the following ranges:

Grades	Ranges (number of students per FTE teacher)
Pre-K	(12-15 students per class)
K-2	(19-20 students per class)
3-4	(23-24 students per class)
5-12	(25-26 students per class)

## 8. What if my child's class size is bigger than the ranges listed above?

The ranges are targets with our goal of allocating teaching staff to get as close to these targets as we can. In order to do this, several things may happen. We might decide to:

- Create combined classes (where possible) to lower class sizes across grades
- Add additional FTE to the allocation which could be used for teacher or Educational assistant time (this would be a school based decision)

## 9. How do combined classes work?

A combined class is one that includes students from two or more grade levels who work in one classroom setting. In the past, this was referred to as a "split" class. Teachers who instruct more than one grade look for places in the curriculum where there is overlap (e.g. French language arts) and will also implement something called looping (typically in the sciences and/ or social studies). Looping is where the teacher will teach one curriculum to both grades one year and then the next grade's curriculum to both grades the following year (e.g. in a grade 3/4 classroom, the teacher may teach the grade 4 science curriculum this year to the entire class and then the grade 3 curriculum to the entire class the following year).

In all French Immersion programs, the best scenario is to have another teacher instruct the English language arts program as this keeps the integrity of French only within the French Immersion classes.

## 10. What happens if we move and my child has not learned his or her grade level curriculum in the combined class?

Throughout the year we have students move in from different provinces and regions across Alberta. In each of these instances, we individualize programs based on what the student has come to us with and what we believe they need to be successful. With the focus on curriculum being skills based, the content in both Social Studies and Science in particular is used as a way to learn the skills and processes of inquiry, problem solving, and the attitudes that will enable them to become engaged citizens.

## 11. What is a bilingual diploma?

Alberta Education does not issue a "bilingual" diploma. The Alberta High School Diploma simply states that it "is awarded to ..... who has fulfilled the requirements prescribed by Alberta Education for graduation from high school in the Province of Alberta, Canada."

Graduating French Immersion students in a number of school districts or high schools in our province are given certificates indicating that they have met local criteria. Examples: Certificate of Bilingual Studies, Certificate of Bilingual Competence, Diplôme a satisfait les exigences du programme d'immersion, etc. The criteria for these certificates vary, depending on the number of subjects taught in French within that district or school (in Alberta, senior high school immersion programs range from just one subject—French Language Arts—to more than half of all subjects taught in French).

Parents and students should be aware that the document which is submitted to postsecondary institutions for admission is not the diploma, but the High School Transcript. This lists the courses taken in grades 10-12 and the marks awarded. The language of instruction is indicated.

## 12. What do University or Colleges look at for a level of French?

All universities, including Faculté Saint-Jean accept FLA30-1 or FLA 30-2 as requirements for entrance into their programs. Universities around the world accept the DELF B2 for entrance into their programs. Many colleges and universities in Canada will accept DELF B1 depending on the program the student is registered for.

## 13. What do our high school students think?

We asked our current high school French Immersion students their thoughts around four key questions:

1. *Do you wish you had more subjects taught in French?*

Students felt as though they had achieved bilingual status and realized that more subject areas taught in French would expand their language learning even further but spoke to the fact that they did not want to lose the opportunities available to them in high school (e.g. complementary courses).

2. *How did taking French Immersion impact your complementary course selection?*

- Grade 10– students take FLA as one complementary course and 2 additional complementary courses
- Grade 11
  - students who take 3 sciences (Bio/Chem/Physics) take FLA as their complementary course
  - students who take 2 sciences take FLA and one other complementary course
- Grade 12 – all complementary courses are available to students

3. *What do you think of taking FLA 20 and 30 back to back in grade 11?*

Students felt that this approach allowed more time to concentrate on diploma courses in grade 12 and opened the opportunity for doing work experience/volunteering in FI classrooms in the elementary grades.

4. *What is your perspective on field trips related to French Immersion?*

Students felt that the trip to France proved that they were fully functional in French. Both English and French students participated in the trip with a Social Studies focus. Students suggested doing a trip including all FI students every other year to balance cost.