



Frequently Asked Questions about the Core French Program

What is Core French?

The Core French program is mandatory in all English-language schools, beginning in Grade 4. Students receive 120 hours of French per year in Grades 4-8, from a teacher with French as a Second Language qualifications.

In the Core French program, “students should advance through an organized sequence of learning experiences that permits a steady accumulation of knowledge and skills. Therefore, once students embark on an instructional sequence in Core French, they must be given the opportunity to continue in an uninterrupted program to Grade 8. The elementary school curriculum for Core French is designed to prepare students for success in the corresponding program at the secondary level. The expectations that form the basis of the secondary school curriculum build on the knowledge and skills that students acquire in their elementary program.” (Revised FSL Curriculum, 2013)

Like all French as a Second Language programs, the Core French program works towards the goals from *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12* (Ministry of Education) to:

1. Increase student confidence, proficiency, and achievement in FSL.
2. Increase the percentage of students studying FSL until graduation.
3. Increase student, educator, parent, and community engagement in FSL.

How will my child benefit by studying French as a second language (FSL)?

In Ontario and throughout Canada, many jobs require skills in both French and English. Even when it is not a mandatory requirement, French can be a valuable asset in work that involves interacting with the public.

Besides creating more work options and the potential to earn a higher income, learning FSL helps to strengthen first-language skills and establishes a solid foundation for learning additional languages. Studies have shown that learning more than one language has a positive effect on the development of problem-solving and creative-thinking abilities.

Additional personal benefits include a heightened appreciation for French culture in Canada and around the world, a broadening of global perspectives, and increased opportunities for international travel and study as well as a general understanding and acceptance of diversity.

How can I prepare my child for learning French as a second language?

Children are not expected to know any French prior to beginning Core French in grade 4. Even if they do not know French themselves, parents can encourage their children to take an interest in French in various ways. Children might enjoy noticing and examining how French is used in their environment – for example, on packaging and on signage. Some children might also enjoy listening to French children’s songs and rhymes, watching French children’s programming, videos, or movies, counting in French, or singing the alphabet in French. Parent engagement leads to student success. Therefore, a positive outlook, a commitment to supporting your child’s education, and a belief in your child’s ability to learn provide a strong foundation for a positive experience in FSL.

How can I help my child succeed in learning French as a second language?

Showing your child that you value the learning of French is one of the most important ways to nurture your child's motivation to do well. You can do this by periodically listening to French audio books with your child, watching French television or movies together, and talking about the many French-speaking communities in Ontario, throughout Canada, and around the world. Parents may find it useful to connect with groups that support FSL education, such as Canadian Parents for French, Ontario branch (www.on.cpf.ca).

Because literacy skills acquired in one language will transfer to another, reading together in English, or the family's first language, as well as in French is a further way for parents to support the development of children's literacy skills.

It is always beneficial for children to see that French is the language used by many people in their daily lives. You may consider opportunities for your child to take part in French activities beyond the classroom, such as school trips, camps, or visits and exchanges.

Open communication with the FSL teacher is invaluable in establishing a strong partnership to support your child's success. This may be accomplished by attending curriculum information sessions and parent-teacher interviews. It is important for parents to communicate with the FSL teacher if there are aspects of the children's FSL learning that require particular attention.

I don't speak French. How can I help my child with French homework?

Parents of Core French students are not expected to know French. Although French is the language of instruction in the Core French classroom, communication between school and home is in English. Parents may use opportunities such as meet-the-staff night, parent-teacher conferences or even school websites or newsletters to find out about the FSL program, homework expectations, and how to support children's success. Homework completion can be monitored by checking home-school communications, such as student agendas.

Parents can help by providing a regular time and place for children to complete work at home. Making homework a routine part of after-school activity will help to ensure that children do their homework assignments. It is also important for parents to applaud their children's efforts – for example, when they listen to their children read or practise oral French.

Parents are encouraged to access available FSL resources in libraries and on the Internet. Please refer to the *Online Resources* section to access some FSL supports.

How can I be involved in the Core French program at my child's school if I don't speak French?

There are many ways in which parents can become involved in the Core French program, such as assisting on French excursions or with special events in the class or school (e.g., French cafés, Carnaval, or Mardi Gras celebrations).

How can I help my child understand the benefits of continuing to learn French until secondary school graduation and beyond?

Children should understand that it takes time to develop French-language skills. Like a novice athlete or musician, an FSL learner cannot be expected to master the required skills without instruction and practice

over an extended period of time. Drawing attention to bilingual role models can motivate children to continue their FSL studies so that they become proficient in French.

It is important to discuss the benefits of having French-language skills with children when they are thinking about secondary school course options, and ideally earlier than this time, so they can make decisions that do not close doors and limit their opportunities in the future. Parents can point out that having a high level of proficiency in French can open up a wider range of career opportunities, both in Canada and around the world.

What do I do if my child encounters difficulties in Core French?

If you are concerned that your child is experiencing difficulties, you should contact the Core French teacher so that together you can discuss what can be done to help your child's learning. Most children encounter challenges from time to time, but if your child is worried or frustrated, it could be a sign of an underlying problem that should be resolved as soon as possible. Children progress at different rates and learn in different ways, so teachers plan instruction and assessment taking into consideration students' interests, learning styles, and previously acquired knowledge and skills.

Will my child be able to speak French as well as read, write, and understand it?

All French as a second language students are expected to develop skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In grades 4 and 5 of the Core French program, there is an emphasis on listening and speaking skills, while reading and writing are developed through these oral skills. The Core French program is intended to help students develop a usable command of the language. As in any other subject, the level of achievement will differ depending on the child.

There are many factors that influence the level of proficiency attained, but students normally progress from being able to use very simple language about themselves and familiar situations to being able to communicate about a broader range of topics, using and understanding increasingly complex language structures. Generally, the more FSL courses taken, the higher degree of fluency and accuracy attained.

My child has been identified by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee as an Exceptional Student, and has an Individual Education Plan. Will my child be eligible for an exemption from French?

All children, including those with special education needs, can benefit from second language instruction. However, in some very rare cases principals may recommend an exemption based on clear criteria, process and documentation required for such exemptions.

My child is in Grade 3 in a Grade 3/4 split class. Will my child take French along with the Grade 4 students?

Grade 3 students in a grade 3/4 split have the benefit of being exposed to the French program alongside their grade 4 classmates, however, the Grade 3 students are not assessed in this subject area as this is not part of their curriculum. This should well prepare them for success in grade 4. The reason this happens is because preparation time for junior/intermediate staff is generated through the French teacher. Since grade 4 students require French, this is the only place for the grade 3 students to be in order for the classroom teacher to get the required preparation time daily. A grade will not be assigned for this time in French, although anecdotal comments will be provided on the student's progress. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your school Principal.

What should my child consider when choosing FSL courses at secondary school?

Grade 8 students should reflect on their strengths, interests, and goals as they consider the FSL course descriptions and expectations contained in the Ontario curriculum documents

(www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/fsl.html). Students are encouraged to discuss their choices with their current elementary FSL teacher, and where possible, a secondary FSL teacher.

As part of *Creating Pathways to Success* policy and program requirements, starting in Grade 7 students will use a web-based Individual Pathways Plan (IPP) to document their learning and career/life planning. Part of this planning will include an exploration of courses available at secondary school and an investigation of potential career pathways.

(www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/.../creatingpathwayssuccess.pdf)

While Ontario students are only required to obtain 1 secondary credit in French as a second language, FSL courses are often available in secondary schools from grade 9 to 12, in order to encourage the continuation of second-language learning.

Secondary schools may offer **Open French** courses for students who did not acquire 600 hours of Core French instruction by the end of grade 8. Parents of these students should discuss this option with their child's current elementary FSL teacher, as well as contact the secondary school where their children will be attending.

Where can my child find out about postsecondary opportunities to study in French?

Students can search for French courses and programs on the websites of postsecondary institutions. The following links provide contacts for all Ontario colleges and universities:

www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/postsecondary/schoolsprogram/college/

www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/postsecondary/schoolsprogram/university/

French programs may be listed under various headings, so students should check terms such as Modern Languages, Humanities, French as a Second Language, French Immersion, or Français. In addition to finding out about the courses and programs offered, FSL students may be interested in seeing if postsecondary institutions provide opportunities to complete a portion of the FSL program in a French community.

Where can I find out more about FSL programs in Ontario?

The Ministry of Education provides information about FSL programs in Ontario on its website at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/FLS.html.

The Grand Erie District School Board provides details about the Core French program on its website at www.granderie.ca.

Elementary curriculum documents are available online at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/fsl.html.

Secondary curriculum documents are available online at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/fsl.html.

The following link provides information on French-language and bilingual postsecondary institutions: www.ontario.ca/education-and-training/french-language-institutions.

Online Resources

A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Parents and Communities as Partners in FSL pp. 22-29 (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/frameworkFLS.pdf>)

CPF-Canadian Parents for French, Ontario Branch (www.on.cpf.ca) – Offers many supports for parents, including a series of *Homework Help Tip Sheets*.

CPF Homework Help Tip Sheet of Online Resources

(<http://on.cpf.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/Online-French-resources-col.pdf>)

Ministry of Education (www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123) – Tips in several languages on a variety of ways to support children's learning at home.

The FSL Toolbox (www.fslhomeworktoolbox.ca/) – A wealth of information for parents, offering practical tools for learning French, including videos and audio files.

Word Reference (www.wordreference.com) – An online dictionary that offers French-English and English-French translations.