



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Kindergarten Information Package

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's kindergarten program provides children with organized educational activities appropriate for young learners, taking into account their physical, intellectual, social, and emotional needs. To give each child the best beginning possible, our kindergarten program provides a host of unique learning opportunities and experiences. To learn more about kindergarten, the extended day program, elementary programming and how you can get involved in your child's education please review the following factsheets:

- Welcome to Early Learning Full-Day Kindergarten – Information for Parents
- Assist Your Child's Adjustment to School – Early Learning Full-Day Kindergarten
- Full-Day Kindergarten and Extended Day Program – Frequently Asked Questions
- Extended Day Program
- School Councils
- English Program
- Alternative Elementary Program
- French as a Second Language Programs

These factsheets have been provided for your convenience but can also be viewed online by visiting the OCDSB's Publications page at www.ocdsb.ca/med/pub or by scanning the QR code with your smartphone.



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Welcome to Early Learning Full-Day Kindergarten

Information for Parents

The Ottawa Carleton District School Board's Kindergarten program provides children with educational activities appropriate for young learners, taking into account their physical, intellectual, social and emotional needs. The young child's natural world is one of curiosity, exploration and imagination and the richest gains are likely to occur when these capacities are promoted in a play-based, inquiry focused classroom. Children investigate and develop an understanding of their world through play. Play provides the context in which the educator observes the children's social, emotional, physical and intellectual interactions within a classroom setting, assesses their stages of development aligned with the curriculum, and supports and encourages experiences to further their growth.

Personal and Social Development

In order to learn effectively, children must feel good about themselves, about school, and about others. A prime goal of kindergarten is to foster social and emotional growth. In Kindergarten, children practice socially appropriate behaviour and develop self-regulation skills to assist them in working with new people and situations.

Cognitive Development

Kindergarten encourages children to develop critical thinking skills such as observation, compare/contrast, categorization and sequencing skills, to question, to experiment, and to develop creativity through language, music, the arts, and drama. Children explore topics of natural interest to young learners through inquiry, connecting prior knowledge to new contexts in order to further understand their world.

Language and Mathematical Development

The Kindergarten program enhances communication skills in early learners. Language skills such as speaking, listening and concepts of print, are explored through games, music, stories, and discussions, building the necessary emergent literacy skills required for later instruction in reading, writing, and oral communication. Children's conceptual understanding of mathematical thinking is developed through investigation of number, measurement, geometry and spatial sense, patterning, data management and probability. Children are

provided with opportunities to explore these concepts in a variety of ways, such as the use of manipulatives, sand and water, dramatic play.

Science and Technology

Children's natural curiosity and sense of wonder is enhanced through Science and Technology in Kindergarten. Through hands-on investigation, focused and free exploration, observation, questioning, and predicting, children will develop their awareness of the natural and built environment and the need to care for and respect the world around them.

Health and Physical Development

In Kindergarten, children also begin to explore concepts related to their own health and well-being such as healthy physical activity and nutrition. Children will use a variety of materials such as balls, hoops, water, sand and climbers to further their large muscle, gross motor control. Fine motor development is enhanced through activities such as painting, cutting, gluing, keyboarding, tracing, manipulating small objects (eg. buttons, zippers), puzzles.

The Arts

Early Learners are naturally drawn to artistic activities. In Kindergarten, children are given opportunities to express their growing sense of self through drama, dance, music and visual arts. Early learners have access to a wide variety of materials, resources, experiences and open-ended activities allowing them to express themselves and foster their imagination, creativity, and diversity. Through the arts, thinking and communication, as well as early literacy and numeracy skills, are enhanced.

Great Beginnings Start with Caring Staff

All Kindergarten classes in September of 2014 will include a Kindergarten teacher working in partnership with an Early Childhood Educator. These Early Years Educator Teams have a genuine love for young learners and model patience, kindness and empathy toward the needs of young children. They understand that Kindergarten is the child's first introduction to formal schooling. The transition from home to school requires that the classroom provide a warm, safe, caring and nurturing environment, essentially, an extension of the home, in order for

the child to fully develop in the areas outlined above. Our staff is dedicated to assisting your child in developing self-regulation, emotional and social competence, curiosity and confidence in learning, respect for the diversity of his or her classmates, health, well-being and a sense of security.

Your Child's Introduction to Kindergarten

Once your child is registered in kindergarten, you will be notified regarding school entry procedures. You and your child will have an opportunity to meet your child's teacher alone, prior to regular attendance of all children. This meeting will occur during the first week of school. Its primary focus is to share information about your child including preschool and health history including allergies, developmental milestones, and pertinent details relating to your child's history in your family. At this time, there is no attempt by the teacher to assess your child's academic readiness for formal learning. Rather, the emphasis is on creating a relaxed, joyful transition from home to school.

In order to foster a climate of warmth and comfort, the entry of kindergarten children is staggered over several days. This means each child enters school for the first time as one of a smaller group, whose needs can better be met by the teacher during the first busy days of school.

City of Ottawa Public Health Branch

Although the City of Ottawa Public Health Branch gathers information about your child's immunization record, it no longer provides visual and auditory screening. If you have question about immunization please visit the ocdsb website (www.ocdsb.ca), contact the City of Ottawa Immunization Line at 613-580-6744 ext. 24108 or visit www.ottawa.ca/health for information. Parents who notice their child having difficulty seeing or hearing should contact their family doctor. Parents who are concerned about their child's communication development before the age of five years, should contact the Parent-Child Information Line of the First Words Program at 613-737-7600 ext 2500.

French as a Second Language Instruction

All children in junior and senior kindergarten are introduced daily to French through songs, rhymes, movement, stories, and a variety of other activities. Whether it be Core French (Junior and Senior Kindergarten) or Early French Immersion (available at the Senior Kindergarten level), our child-centered FSL programs serve to develop students' communication skills in the French language, focusing on the concurrent development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The programs promote an appreciation of French culture in Canada and in other regions of the world. Further information is available from schools offering these programs. Please visit our website or call 613-721-1820, for a list of these schools.

The Learning Environment

The Early Learning Full-Day Kindergarten program is designed to ensure that the strengths, needs and interests of the child are addressed. The Kindergarten schedule is flexible and open-ended, allowing for extension or revisiting of an activity, educator-team and child initiated activities, daily blocks of time dedicated to planned, purposeful play, as well as literacy and numeracy instruction, which may take place in large or small groups and at learning centers. Learning centers may include water, sand, crafts, blocks and other building tools, nature, puppets, dramatic play, library, puzzles, climbing and computers. The focus of the centers is inquiry based and modified to accommodate the changing needs and interests of the students. During play, the Educator Teams observe, monitor, document and assess children's progress towards the achievement of the learning expectations and feedback is provided on an ongoing basis. Further learning opportunities are then planned to enhance future growth and development.

Kindergarten Parents are Important

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board believes in a strong partnership between school and home. An active role in your child's education is vital.

Volunteering

Children, teachers, and parents gain from active parent volunteer programs. Kindergarten teachers often welcome parents, older students, teachers-in-training, early childhood educators, senior citizens, specialists such as storytellers or musicians, and other members of the community. Volunteers enrich the kindergarten program in many ways. Parents gain valuable insights by observing their children in the preschool setting; children feel special pride and pleasure by having parents with them.

School Councils

All our elementary and secondary schools have a school council. Parents and guardians are encouraged to take an active part in this advisory group. To volunteer or find out more about your school council, speak to the principal, or the kindergarten teacher.

For Further Information

Feel free to talk to the staff at your neighbourhood school. These caring individuals are able to provide you with support, guidance, and information on kindergarten. Information sessions are held in individual schools. These meetings highlight program possibilities, children's needs, and preparation for school, as well as parent concerns.

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Assist Your Child's Adjustment to School

Early Learning Full-Day Kindergarten

The Early Learning Full-Day Kindergarten program follows the principle that partnerships with families and communities strengthen the ability of early childhood settings to meet the needs of young children. There are many ways that parents can support their child prior to entering Kindergarten, to prepare them for learning in a school setting. These include, but are not limited to, ensuring that your child has ample opportunity to engage in different types of play; providing daily physical activities to help develop gross and fine motor skills; talking and listening to your child; making sure your child's nutritional needs are being met; helping your child with daily routines such as getting dressed, feeding, toileting, cleaning up after activities, self-regulating their active and quiet play times. Here are some ways you can help prepare your child for kindergarten:

Read to your child, preferably daily. Select a variety of books of different lengths and different subjects. Relate the pictures to the story. This enhances language development and stimulates children's curiosity and imagination.

Talk with and listen to your child about daily activities — what he/she is doing; what you are doing. Strong oral communication skills will become a solid foundation for later academic achievement.

Encourage other adults in your child's life to emphasize the positive aspects of school: new friends, a caring teacher, and opportunities to learn, grow, and have fun. Find out the teacher's name and use it when discussing school activities.

Recognize it is sometimes just as difficult for you to face the separation from your child as it is for your child to face separation from you. Take comfort from understanding that these feelings are normal and they will pass as you and your child grow accustomed to a new routine.

Discover the route your child will travel to and from school and obtain information on walking distances. Several dress rehearsals will build your child's confidence and help establish safety conscious routines.

Make sure the child walking to school is accompanied by an adult. Children on buses are met on arrival at, and departure from, school by the teacher or school supervisor. Children must be met by an adult when they are dropped off following their day at school. Visit the school. Use the playground and apparatus.

Develop opportunities for your child's exposure to music, rhythm and rhyming activities which help the development of reading skills.

Accustom your child to consistent routines such as getting up at a certain time, getting dressed, and so forth.

Help your child to develop fine motor skills. Fine motor skills are those skills involving the small muscles of the body and include such activities as drawing, cutting and gluing, as well as handling Playdough, building towers of blocks, stringing large beads on a string, catching a beanbag or large ball.

Discuss personal safety, busing, and strangers. Be sure children know their name, address, and telephone number.

Review the calendar with your child. Circle the day on which your child starts school. You may also wish to mark gym and library days, class trips, birthdays, and special occasions.

Label all your child's belongings in an inconspicuous place: indoor and outdoor clothing, shoes, boots, snack container, drink container, and backpack.

Prepare your child for successful experiences. Provide opportunities at home with situations that challenge your child to manage alone when toileting, dressing, tidying, and eating. These self-regulation skills help children feel good about themselves and help them realize they can solve their own problems and be supported while doing so.

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Full-Day Kindergarten and Extended Day Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How will Full-Day Kindergarten work?

A: There are two components — the Core program is the school day classroom component and the Extended Day Program which represents the before and after school program. In the core program, certified teachers and registered early childhood educators will work together to deliver the Full-Day Kindergarten Program. The Extended Day Program will be led by registered early childhood educators.

Q: What happens in the classroom?

A: Through instruction and play-based learning the teacher and early childhood educator will work with the students to develop their capacity in language and mathematics, build a strong foundation for future learning, engage in healthy physical activities and the arts, and develop socially and emotionally through interaction with their peers and the adults who guide them. Classrooms will operate with a District average of 26 students to one team composed of one teacher and one early childhood educator.

Q: Is Full-Day Kindergarten mandatory?

A: No, Full-Day Kindergarten, like kindergarten, will remain optional for 4 and 5-year-olds. In Ontario, kindergarten is voluntary; children are required to attend school once they turn 6 years old. If your child is enrolled in the full day program, the extended day program, is also optional.

Q: How do I register my child?

A: You can register your child by visiting your child's designated school. To register you will require your child's birth certificate or proof of age, immunization record, health card and proof of address.

Q: When I register, can I choose to have my child attend only half days?

A: You may choose to have your child attend only half days. However, it is designed as a full day program. In addition, transportation will not be provided outside normal school hours. As such, parents will be responsible for getting their child to or from school should they choose to attend only half days. Parents who are considering this option should discuss the matter with their school principal.

Q: How will the Extended Day Program work?

A: During the school year, schools will offer an Extended Day Program before and after school which will be led by registered early childhood educators. These programs are optional and will be available for a fee. Subsidies will be available for some families from the City of Ottawa, based on financial need. Extended Day programs will operate subject to sufficient enrolment (minimum 3 students must be registered).

Q: How can I apply for the Extended Day program?

A: If your child will be attending a Full-Day Kindergarten school in the fall and you are interested in the Extended Day Program, please let us know you intend to register by completing the Extended Day Program – Child Registration available on our website www.ocdsb.ca and through your Full-Day Kindergarten school.

Q: Will all Full-Day Kindergarten schools offer the Extended Day Program?

A: A minimum of 3 students are required for the extended day program to be offered at a Full-Day Kindergarten school. More information on locations is posted on our website at www.ocdsb.ca. Please check back often for updates.

Q: How much will it cost to enrol my child in the Extended Day Program?

A: The legislation authorizes and requires school districts to charge fees to recover costs associated with operating Extended Day programs. The fee per student is currently set at around \$20 per day, payable on a monthly basis.



Q: How will subsidies be determined? Will my family be eligible for a subsidy?

A: The Ministry of Education has stated that subsidy eligibility and amounts will be determined according to the current provincial child care subsidy eligibility rules and income test. For more information please visit our website.

Q: Will the Extended Day Program be available to all 4 and 5-year-olds at the school?

A: All schools that offer Full-Day Kindergarten are expected to offer an Extended Day Program, however a minimum of 3 students will be required to operate the program. The hours and availability of before and after-school care will be determined by community needs and school start times. Generally we expect to offer services beginning at 7 a.m. until school starts and from dismissal to 6 p.m.

Q: Will the Extended Day Program be available to older children at the school?

A: The Extended Day Program could be available for 6 to 12-year-olds where there is sufficient space and is subject to demand. This will be determined on a site-by-site basis depending on the number of program registrants.

Q: Will the program be available during school holidays, PA days, and the summer?

A: Yes. The program will be available during school holidays, PA days, and during the summer, at many locations, based on parental interest.

Q: Will the school district provide busing or other transportation for children to and from the extended day program?

A: No, Parents will be responsible for getting their child to and from the Extended Day Program.

Q: How can I get more Information?

A: More details are on our website, www.ocdsb.ca, or you can call the Extended Day Program office at 613-239-2378.



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The Extended Day Program

Before and after school child care for children from Kindergarten to age 12

Extended Day Programs offer parents of children in the kindergarten program to age twelve with access to before and after school child care. The program is led by registered Early Childhood Educators who offer programming that includes small and large group age appropriate activities.

These structured and non-structured activities offer children opportunities to learn through play. There are two ways an extended program can be offered. The District can run its own program at any school with a full-day kindergarten program.

Also, an eligible day care operator can enter into an agreement with the District to offer programming on the District's behalf. Your school can let you know which of these program arrangements are in place. By 2014-2015 all Ottawa-Carleton District School Board schools will offer an Extended Day Program. Extended Day programs will operate subject to sufficient enrolment (minimum 3 students registered).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who can attend?

A. The program is available for any child from kindergarten to age 12 *in a school that has full-day kindergarten programs.*

Q. How do I apply for the Extended Day program?

A. Registration forms for children new to the program will be available in schools and online starting in January of every year. Fill in a registration form and leave it with the school office or email it to earlylearning@ocdsb.ca. Students currently enrolled in an EDP will be given registration forms directly at their EDP site.

Q. What happens in the program?

A. The program is developed to complement what happens during the regular school day. Activities will include quiet reading time, activities in the gym or outside and free play time in the classroom. Your child will be in a familiar surrounding with staff and friends they have been with during the day.

Q. What are the hours of operation?

A. The program runs on all regular school days from 7:00 a.m. to the start of the school and begins at the end of the school day and runs until 6:00 p.m. Parents may register their child in the morning, afternoon or both programs.

Q. Will the Extended Day Program be available during school holidays, PA days and the summer?

A. The program will operate where there is sufficient enrolment, during PA Days, March Break and some days at Christmas Break at additional cost. Some schools will have a summer program available for students based on parental interest. Registration is optional for all of these dates.

Q. How much will it cost to enroll my child in the Extended Day Program?

A. The Ministry of Education requires boards to have the Board of Trustees approve the daily fee annually. In past years, the daily fee for before and after school care has been in the \$20.00 range. Each school has a prorated fee for morning only or afternoon only care. Fees are payable monthly by an automatic deduction to your bank account. Parents/guardians will receive a tax deductible receipt for all fees paid to the OCDSB Extended Day Program.

Q. Are there subsidies available for the Extended Day Program?

A. The OCDSB has a limited number of subsidized spaces available through a purchase of service agreement with the City of Ottawa.

If a child currently has a subsidized space, to request a transfer to an Extended Day Program, ensure that this option is filled in on the registration form under Subsidy/Fee Information. This is not a guarantee, and parents will be contacted to confirm if a transfer is possible.

If a family would like to apply for a City of Ottawa subsidized space, then they will need to indicate this option on the registration form under Subsidy/Fee Information. The child's name will be added to the waiting list for subsidy requests, and parents should indicate if they want to wait for a possible subsidized space or enroll in the program and pay for the costs. Parents will be contacted with further information if a subsidy becomes available. Parents can visit the City of Ottawa's online Subsidy Calculator to see whether or not they may qualify for a Child Care Fee Subsidy.

Q. Will transportation be provided to attend the Extended Day Program?

A. No. Parents are responsible for getting their child to and from the program.

Q. Will food be provided?

A. The Extended Day Program will provide a healthy snack in the before school portion of the day and in the after school portion of the day. Parents are responsible for providing their child with a lunch at all times.

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School Councils

All schools in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) should have an advisory school council to help increase communication between schools and their communities and to serve the needs of students.

The school council liaises through the school principal and is an important link between parents and the school community. Some of the key duties of a school council include:

Building a sense of community through:

- organizing extra-curricular activities in the school
- coordinating school-based services and community partnerships related to social, health, recreational, and nutrition programs
- advising on community use of school facilities
- the local coordination of services for children and youth

Enhancing the home–school relationship through:

- establishing school–community communication strategies
- developing methods of reporting to parents/guardians and the community

Providing advice and comments on areas such as:

- the school-year calendar
- the school code of student conduct
- curriculum and program goals and priorities
- the responses of the school or District to achievement in provincial and District assessment programs
- the preparation of the school profile

- the principal profile — provision of input as to the qualities, skills, attitudes, and training/education for the District and administration to consider in the selection of school principals
- the school budget priorities, including local capital improvement plans
- the development, implementation, and review of Board policies at the local level

The principal assists the school council in carrying out its obligations by:

- providing existing non-confidential information*
- giving notice of the first school council meeting of the year to all parents
- working with the school council to publish information about its activities
- endorsing the school council's fundraising activities (within the parameters and guidelines established by the Board) for the benefit of the school and/or the council

**Note:* School councils cannot access information on individual students and staff or discuss personnel matters or matters that are dealt with under collective agreements. Parents/guardians should speak directly to the teacher or principal to resolve any individual concerns.

Who Sits on the School Council?

Membership on the school council is open to all parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school — community representatives, intermediate and secondary students, the school principal (non-voting), teachers, and administrative and support staff. The composition of the school council should reflect the diversity of the community it serves.

Members of the council are elected annually by their peers and parents/guardians must hold the majority of seats.

Elementary school councils should have at least nine members and secondary school councils should have at least eleven members.

When Are Meetings Held?

School council meetings are usually held every month at the school (minimum of four meetings per year). All parents/guardians and interested members of the community are encouraged to attend the meetings and express their views. The first meeting each year will be held within 30 calendar days of the beginning of the school year.

What is OCASC?

The Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC) is an umbrella organization for OCDSB school councils. The District recognizes the important role played by OCASC in strengthening the involvement of parents and the community in schools and in Board decision making through representation on Board committees and in other ways. Each school council has the opportunity to elect a delegate to attend monthly OCASC meetings. For more information, visit www.ocasc.ca.

Parent Involvement Committee

At the OCDSB, our Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) supports, encourages and enhances parent engagement across the District in order to improve student achievement and well-being. Everyone is welcome to attend PIC meetings.

Additional Information

Please visit www.ocdsb.ca for more resources including information about key Board policies and procedures relevant to school councils, OCASC and District contacts, information from the Ministry of Education, and how to communicate effectively with the District.

General information on school councils can also be found at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/council.pdf.

Contact Information

For more information about your school council activities, please contact your school office. Your trustee and superintendent are also available to assist you with the specific needs of your school.

For further information about school councils, PIC and OCASC please contact:

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English Program

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's English Program allows students to concentrate on English language skills. This program is available from kindergarten to graduation. Like all OCDSB programs it is child-centred, it stresses proficiency in all subject areas, and it allows students to develop a high level of communication skills in the English language. In this program English is the language of instruction for all subjects other than French.

At the elementary level the subjects taught are: Language, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Studies, History, Geography, Health and Physical Education, The Arts, and Core French.

At the secondary level courses may be offered in the following subjects: English, Mathematics, Science, Classical and International Languages, Native Languages, Native Studies, English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development, Technological Education, Canadian and World Studies, Social Studies and the Humanities, Core French, The Arts, Health and Physical Education, Guidance and Career Education, and Business Studies.

Core French

Core French is an integral part of the English Program. French is taught for the equivalent of 100 minutes per week in junior and senior kindergarten and 200 minutes per week from grades 1 to 8 inclusive.

The principal aim of the Core French Program is to provide students with fundamental communication skills in French and an understanding of the nature of the language and its culture. Core French offers students the chance to develop a usable command of the French language. As with all FSL programs, Core French is a pathway to bilingualism. This program is mandatory for all elementary students not enrolled in French

Immersion. Every student enrolled in the English Program has access to French Immersion programs starting in senior kindergarten (Early French Immersion), or grade 4 (Middle French Immersion).

At the secondary level Core French is a single credit course (110 hours) and is offered at all levels from grades 9 to 12. In keeping with Ministry of Education requirements, French is compulsory in grade 9.

For More Information

[English Program](#)

Contact your school.

[Immersion Programs](#)

Contact your school or see our factsheet (French as a Second Language Programs) which covers the various programs that are available.

Before parents make a final decision, they are encouraged to discuss the choice of program with appropriate school staff and other professionals.



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Alternative Elementary Programs

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board supports a range of programs to challenge all students to achieve their personal best. One such program is the Alternative Elementary Program, alongside the English/Core French and French Immersion programs. With strong community support and parent involvement, the Alternative Elementary Program is based on a concept of student-centered learning and this philosophy translates into all aspects of a student's experience at school. The program provides students opportunities to meet Ministry expectations with flexibility to allow greater concentration in areas of their own interest and aptitudes.

The Alternative Philosophy

While the following characteristics are found in many of the programs at the elementary level across the District, collectively they form the foundation of the alternative education philosophy:

- Cooperation and teamwork are emphasized instead of competition in all aspects of the school. The core belief is that children who are motivated from within, instead of by rewards, will become lifelong learners, eager to take on challenges.
— *Look for: Everyone's contribution is valued, students are motivated by curiosity and the natural desire to learn, no awards or prizes given.*
- A commitment to innovative approaches to teaching and learning through a shared responsibility among staff, students, and parents.
— *Look for: Community projects, unique and creative units of study, outdoor classrooms and other non-traditional learning environments, mixed age group project-based learning.*
- A balance between student-directed and teacher-directed learning: the teacher acts as a facilitator/mentor/guide of the child's learning. This child-centered approach enhances self-concept, enthusiasm for learning, and personal responsibility.
— *Look for: Classroom arrangements foster collaboration (groups of students working together).*
- Multi-aged groupings promote interaction among children of different ages and at different stages of development, and provides an environment wherein students learn from each other as well as from the teacher.
— *Look for: Intentional use of mix-grade classrooms where*

possible, inter-class collaboration on projects, buddies, mentoring and student leadership.

- An integrated curriculum approach provides a natural progression from whole to parts and stresses the interrelation of all learning and subjects.
— *Look for: Interconnectedness amongst subjects taught in context.*
- A family & community-centered school environment wherein parental involvement is essential for the partnership between the home and school, which in turn fosters self-respect, respect for the ideas and the opinions of others, and an appreciation for people's differences.
— *Look for: Families and community members are welcomed into all classrooms, committees and school activities, and their contributions and input are valued.*
- Assessment and evaluation is on-going using multiple strategies which include student self-evaluations and student-led conferences. The primary focus of this process is personal growth, as well as being used as a tool for program planning and assessment.
— *Look for: Student goal-setting, portfolio creation, anecdotal reports, acknowledgment of individual learning styles in reference to assessment, reduced emphasis on grades and traditional tests.*

Alternative Elementary Program Structure

An Alternative Elementary Program is structured to ensure that each child has the opportunity to complete the core curriculum specified by the Board and the Ministry of Education. Parents and teachers help students develop their own interests. This approach to learning helps children develop positive attitudes that will carry them through their school career, and their lives.

Who Can Attend an Alternative Elementary Program?

An Alternative Elementary Program is open to everyone — programs are offered in different parts of the city — and operate within Board policies and provincial statutes.

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French as a Second Language Programs

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's French as a Second Language (FSL) programs differ in intensity but share a common purpose: to develop students' communication skills in the French language. All programs are child-centred and focus on the concurrent development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Knowledge and skills are taught in an authentic, meaningful context that emphasizes proficiency in all subject areas. The programs promote an appreciation of French culture in Canada and in other regions of the world.

"The importance of studying French in the Canadian context cannot be overemphasized. French is not only one of Canada's two official languages, but is also widely used throughout the world with respect to business, culture, and international diplomacy. The ability to communicate in French gives students many advantages, both in Canada and internationally, and helps them gain a better understanding and appreciation of French-speaking societies."

— Ministry of Education (Ontario)

Elementary Level

At the elementary level, the OCDSB offers 3 types of FSL programs: Core French, Early French Immersion (EFI), and Middle French Immersion (MFI).

The principal aim of the Core French Program is to develop basic communication skills in French and gain an appreciation of French culture in Canada and in other parts of the world. The program allows more time to concentrate on English language skills while developing a basic level of proficiency in the French language. The program is mandatory for all elementary students not enrolled in French Immersion.

French Immersion, an optional program, is a type of bilingual education in which students receive instruction in French for a significant portion of the school day. It is designed specifically for students whose mother tongue is not French. It enables them to become functionally bilingual through a maximum exposure to French. In all French Immersion programs students study the same curriculum content as their peers in the English Program.

The OCDSB provides two delivery models for French Immersion gifted students at the elementary level: congregated French Immersion classes at designated sites (gifted centres) and regular classroom with program differentiation. Students who have been identified as gifted through an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) may participate in these programs. FSL programs are available to students residing in all areas of the District. Transportation will be provided in accordance with Board policy.

Secondary Level

At the secondary level, the OCDSB offers three types of FSL programs: Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion.

The aim of the Core French Program is to provide students with fundamental communication skills in French and an understanding of the nature of the language and its culture. Core French offers students the chance to develop a usable command of the French language that can be expanded through further study or through contact with French-speaking people. At the secondary level, Core French is a single-credit course (110 hours) and is offered at all levels from grade 9 to 12. In keeping with Ministry requirements, French is compulsory in grade 9. Core French is offered at both the academic and applied levels.

The aim of the Extended French Program is to develop students' French-language knowledge and skills and to provide them with an understanding and appreciation of francophone culture in Canada and around the world. By the end of the four-year program, students will be able to converse freely on familiar topics and will be able to read with the occasional help of a dictionary, books, magazines, and newspapers in French. They will also be able to function in a French-speaking community. Schools grant a certificate in Extended French if the student has successfully completed the sequence of four courses in Extended French and a minimum of three courses in other subjects taught in French.

The aim of the French Immersion Program is to develop and refine students' ability to communicate in French as well as to expand their knowledge of the language through the study of francophone literature. By the end of the four-year program, students will participate easily in conversations and discussions. They will also be able to take courses at the college or university level in which French is the language of instruction and will be able to accept employment in which French is the working language. Schools offering French Immersion will accommodate students opting for Extended French certificates. The Extended French certificate will be granted to students by meeting the credit requirements for the Extended French Program. Schools grant a certificate in French Immersion if the student has successfully completed the sequence of four courses in French Immersion and a minimum of six courses in other subjects taught in French.

At the secondary level, French Immersion Gifted Congregated programs are offered at certain designated gifted centres. Students who have been identified as gifted through an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) may participate in these programs. The admission criteria for entry into a secondary gifted program are available through the school.

FSL Program	Core French	Early French Immersion (EFI)	Middle French Immersion (MFI)
Description of program	<p>In the Core French Program students develop basic oral comprehension and communication skills. The program is mandatory for all elementary students not enrolled in French Immersion.</p> <p>In junior and senior kindergarten students receive 100 minutes of French language instruction weekly. From grades 1 to 8 students are taught Core French for a total of 200 minutes per week.</p> <p><i>Note: Core French instruction serves as an important base for students entering one of the French Immersion programs (Early French Immersion or Middle French Immersion).</i></p>	<p>In the Early French Immersion (EFI) Program students are provided with the opportunity to become functionally bilingual through an early entry with maximum exposure to French.</p> <p>In the EFI Program senior kindergarten and grade 1 students receive 100 per cent of their program in French. In grades 2 and 3 students receive 80 per cent of their program in French. In grades 4 to 6 students receive 60 per cent of their program in French. In grades 7 and 8 students receive 50 per cent of their program in French.</p> <p><i>Note: The OCDSB Elementary Time Allocation Model outlines the language of instruction and number of minutes of instruction per week in each subject area.</i></p>	<p>In the Middle French Immersion (MFI) Program students are provided with the opportunity to obtain a solid foundation in English language skills in the primary grades before starting intensive study of a second language.</p> <p>The MFI Program begins in grade 4 after a student has had several years of mainly English language instruction that includes 200 minutes per week of Core French. In grades 4 to 6 students receive 66 per cent of their instruction in French. Generally all subjects, with the exception of English Language Arts and Mathematics, are taught in French. In grades 7 and 8 students receive 50 per cent of their program in French.</p> <p><i>Note: The OCDSB Elementary Time Allocation Model outlines the language of instruction and number of minutes of instruction per week in each subject area.</i></p>
Eligibility for program	<p>All students entering junior and/or senior kindergarten are provided with Core French instruction. The mandated Core French Program continues through to grade 9 for any student not enrolled in a French Immersion Program. Core French is available as an optional course for students in grades 10 to 12.</p>	<p>All students entering senior kindergarten are eligible for enrolment in the EFI Program.</p>	<p>Students entering grade 4 are eligible for enrolment in the MFI Program.</p>
Expected outcomes for students in the program	<p>A student who successfully completes the Core French Program is expected to have a basic level of proficiency in the French language.</p> <p><i>Note: The Core French Program is mandatory for all elementary students not enrolled in French Immersion.</i></p>	<p>A student who successfully completes the EFI Program is expected to be able to communicate with ease and feel comfortable in either language community and also accept employment, training, or further education in either language. The EFI Program produces the highest level of French proficiency, particularly in oral competency.</p> <p><i>Note: This level of achievement is attainable by a student who is enrolled in one of the Immersion programs at the elementary level and who later enrolls in a secondary level program which meets the requirements to obtain the OCDSB Extended French or French Immersion Certificate.</i></p>	<p>A student who successfully completes the MFI Program is expected to be able to communicate with ease and feel comfortable in either language community and also accept employment, training, or further education in either language.</p> <p><i>Note: This level of achievement is attainable by a student who is enrolled in one of the immersion programs at the elementary level and who later enrolls in a secondary level program which meets the requirements to obtain the Extended French or French Immersion Certificate.</i></p>
Frequently Asked Questions			
What are the reasons given by parents for choosing this program?	<p>Parents' choice of the Core French Program is frequently based on a desire to give their children a chance to develop the oral communication skills they need to understand and interact with others, to express themselves, and to communicate their own ideas.</p> <p><i>Note: At the primary level Core French curriculum expectations have been developed in order to prepare students for the provincial expectations in French as a Second Language: Core French, Grades 4-8, Ministry of Education curriculum.</i></p> <p><i>The Ontario Ministry of Education requires students in English-language schools to study French from grades 4 to 9 and to accumulate a minimum of 710 hours of French instruction by the end of grade 9.</i></p>	<p>Parents' choice of EFI is frequently based on a desire to give their children an opportunity to become functionally bilingual through an early entry with maximum exposure to French. Young children usually have less reticence in imitating a French role model, thus take more risks in expressing themselves in French, and get more practice. Many parents look to the EFI Program as a perceived means of improving job opportunities for their children at a later date.</p>	<p>Although there is often an element of self-selection by the student, parental choice of MFI is frequently based on a desire to give their children a chance to obtain a solid grounding in English language skills in the primary grades before starting intensive study of a second language. Many parents look to the MFI Program as a perceived means of improving job opportunities for their children at a later date.</p>

FSL Program	Core French	Early French Immersion (EFI)	Middle French Immersion (MFI)
What effect does the Immersion Program have on children's basic English language skills?	Not applicable	Many years of testing and research show that French Immersion has no negative effect on the development of English language skills as measured by standardized tests. There is an initial lag in English in EFI because of the delay in the introduction of English language arts but this disappears within the first year that English language arts is introduced. Some studies have even shown the enhancement of some English language and study skills of EFI students.	Many years of testing and research show that French Immersion has no negative effect on the development of English language skills as measured by standardized tests. Some studies have even shown the enhancement of some English language skills of MFI students.
What effect does the Immersion Program have on children's academic achievement in other subject areas?	Not applicable	Generally EFI students have not demonstrated any lags relative to the performance of English/Core French Program students. On various system-wide tests the overall tendency has been for immersion students to perform as well as, or better than, comparable students in the English/Core French Program.	Generally MFI students have not demonstrated any lags relative to the performance of English/Core French Program students. On various system-wide tests, the overall tendency has been for immersion students to perform as well as, or better than, comparable students in the English/Core French Program.
How does this Immersion Program rate in terms of French language proficiency outcomes?	Not applicable	Studies of comparison between grade 8 students from the EFI and MFI programs found that, on the overall measure of French proficiency, EFI students on average scored higher than MFI students.	Studies of comparison between grade 8 students from the EFI and MFI programs found that, on the overall measure of French proficiency, EFI students on average scored higher than MFI students.
Does participation in a Core French or Immersion Program affect general intellectual or cognitive growth?	A number of studies suggest that bilingualism, or the process of becoming bilingual, can positively influence aspects of cognitive and linguistic growth.	A number of studies suggest that bilingualism, or the process of becoming bilingual, can positively influence aspects of cognitive and linguistic growth.	A number of studies suggest that bilingualism, or the process of becoming bilingual, can positively influence aspects of cognitive and linguistic growth.
Is the curriculum in the Immersion Program the same as in the English/Core French Program?	Not applicable	The learning expectations and curriculum content for EFI are the same as the learning expectations and curriculum content of the English/Core French Program.	The learning expectations and curriculum content for MFI are the same as the learning expectations and curriculum content of the English/Core French Program.
What options are available for the students in secondary school?	Students are required to complete one compulsory credit in French offered at the grade 9 level. Interested students may continue to study Core French from grades 10 to 12.	When EFI students reach high school they may enter a French Immersion Program, an Extended French Program, or an English/Core French Program.	When MFI students reach high school they may enter the French Immersion Program, the Extended French Program, or an English/Core French Program. <i>Note: The principal has the right to permit students to enrol in a course for which they may not have the entrance requirements if they have achieved the necessary proficiency in French.</i>
What factors should I consider in determining which program is right for my child?	Studies show that students perform better in school if their parents/guardians are involved in their education. Parents/guardians should consider their child's curiosity and enthusiasm towards learning a second language. Parents/guardians can encourage their children to learn French by reinforcing the value of French and other cultures. Parents/guardians can offer their children the opportunity to hear and speak French in authentic situations (e.g., take a trip to Quebec, watch French television programs, read French books, listen to French music, eat at a French restaurant, etc.)	Parents/guardians should consider their child's curiosity and openness towards learning a second language as well as their child's ability to handle a temporary setback in communication skills. Parents/guardians should also consider their readiness to be supportive if their child experiences some difficulties in the beginning. Parents/guardians can also offer their children the opportunity to hear and speak French in authentic situations (e.g., take a trip to Quebec, watch French television programs, read French books, listen to French music, eat at a French restaurant, etc.) Parents/guardians are not expected to be fluent in French.	As parents/guardians have had the opportunity to evaluate their child's overall achievement and adjustment to school in the primary grades, they should consider their child's interest and feelings about entering the program, the learning skills which they have already acquired and can apply to the learning of a second language, as well as their child's ability to handle a temporary setback in communication skills. Parents/guardians should also consider their readiness to be supportive if their child experiences some difficulties in the beginning. Parents/guardians can also offer their children the opportunity to hear and speak French in authentic situations (e.g., take a trip to Quebec, watch French television programs, read French books, listen to French music, eat at a French restaurant, etc.). Parents/guardians are not expected to be fluent in French.

FSL Program	Core French	Early French Immersion (EFI)	Middle French Immersion (MFI)
How do I register my child in this program?	Parents/guardians wishing to register their child in the English/Core French Program should contact the school in their local area to complete the registration process. To determine the school which serves your area, please use the School Locator tool on our website at www.ocdsb.ca or call the Planning Office at 613-596-8780. Kindergarten registration occurs in January/February each year. Transportation is provided in accordance with the Transportation Policy for elementary schools.	Parents/guardians wishing to register their child in the EFI Program should contact the EFI school for their area to complete the registration process. To determine the EFI school which serves your area, please use the School Locator tool on our website at www.ocdsb.ca or call the Planning Office at 613-596-8780. Kindergarten registration occurs in January/February each year. Transportation for these classes is provided in accordance with the Transportation Policy for elementary schools.	Parents/guardians wishing to register their child in the MFI Program should contact the MFI school for their area to complete the registration process. To determine the MFI school which serves your area, please use the School Locator tool on our website at www.ocdsb.ca or call the Planning Office at 613-596-8780. MFI registration occurs in early spring each year. Transportation for these classes is provided in accordance with the Transportation Policy for elementary schools.

Other Frequently Asked Questions

Are FSL programs beneficial for my child?

Yes. Regardless of the FSL Program chosen exposure to the French language provides children with many academic and social benefits, including a deeper understanding of French and French-speaking cultures, a greater number of career options, a lifelong ability to communicate in French, and a facility for learning other languages.

If I choose a French Immersion Program for my child, will it be a detriment to my child if I don't speak French myself?

No, not at all. French Immersion programs were specifically designed for children whose parents/guardians have little or no facility in French. Nevertheless, parents/guardians can still encourage their children to learn French by reinforcing the value of French and other cultures. Parents/guardians can offer their children the opportunity to hear and speak French in authentic situations (e.g., take a trip to Quebec, watch French television programs, read French books, listen to French music, eat at a French restaurant, etc.).

Will my child receive English language instruction in a French Immersion Program?

Yes. With the exception of senior kindergarten and grade 1 in the EFI Program, where 100 per cent of the instruction is in French, students in both EFI and MFI will receive English language instruction for English. By grade 4 students in both programs will also receive English language instruction for Mathematics through to grade 8.

Is it true that French Immersion is only for 'gifted' children?

No. Any student enrolled in the school district is eligible for a French Immersion Program. Children with a variety of learning needs and abilities are enrolled in French Immersion programs.

Can a student who is currently an English language learner enrol in a French Immersion program?

Yes. Research indicates that learning a second, or even a third, language at an early age is possible and has a positive impact on intellectual growth. Cognitive development is enriched and enhanced, as immersion students develop learning skills that they may apply to their first language, other academic subject areas, and life experiences.

Will a French Immersion Program mask, or even worsen, any learning difficulties my child might have?

No. Academic ability is not related to performance in French language skills. A child's learning difficulties in reading, writing, or other subject areas will surface regardless of the language of instruction. These difficulties should not normally be a barrier to bilingual education. French Immersion teachers are very aware of children who may be experiencing learning problems and will work with your child to provide the learning support services required.

Research studies have shown that students who learn another language develop a number of very useful academic and cognitive skills, which they transfer to learning English and other languages as well as to other subjects. Through second-language learning, students' problem-solving, reasoning and creative-thinking skills improve; they also tend to be more tolerant and respectful of other cultures. In addition to these academic and social benefits, the ability to communicate in another language provides students with a distinct advantage in a number of careers. Students also derive generic job skills from learning another language — flexibility, communication, the ability to understand complex issues, the capacity for dealing with uncertainty — all skills that are greatly valued in the workplace.

The Secondary Curriculum Policy Document, Core, Extended, and Immersion French, Grades 9 and 10, September, 1998
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