

FRENCH IMMERSION GRADE ONE



Welcome to the French Immersion Experience!

The curriculum for the French Immersion Program is based on the guidelines of the Milton Public School Curriculum, the Curriculum Frameworks of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the National Standards for Foreign Languages. Instruction in first grade is entirely in French for Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Art, Music and Physical Education classes are taught in English.

The French Immersion Program utilizes a wide range of hands-on, highly contextualized and meaningful activities to introduce French at the first grade level. For your child, learning French the “immersion way” will be much the same as learning his or her first language. In the classroom, immersion teachers use French throughout the school day; and instruction is constantly clarified and illustrated by body language, use of understandable cognates, modeling, visuals, props, manipulatives, songs, rhymes and familiar routines (see *Frequently Asked Questions* for more details).

LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM

LISTENING AND SPEAKING IN FRENCH

Exposing your young child to a second language optimizes his or her learning potential, and capitalizes on the brain’s capacity for language acquisition in the early years. Young children exposed to a second language quickly develop near-native fluency. In first grade, students listen to their teacher speaking French and are systematically encouraged to repeat and imitate what they have heard and seen. All immersion students will go through a normal and necessary “listening period” before speaking spontaneously in the target language. During this period of transition, students get used to their new linguistic environment, gather information and clues, get familiar with new sounds and “bathe themselves” in the target language, much like a baby does with his native tongue. Extended use of songs, short poems and rhymes enables students to use the language in complete sentences in a fun and stress-free manner early in the school year.

While actively engaged in meaningful, concrete and highly contextualized activities, students acquire the target language by using it – one word at a time - from the very first day. With time, they will move from single words and phrases to sentences, working toward fluency. First grade objectives include development of phonemic awareness, acquisition of basic vocabulary, and enhancement of oral comprehension and communication skills. Because French and English are both read from left to right, use the same alphabet and similar sentence structures, reading and spelling skills will be easily transferred to English when the time comes.




READING AND WRITING IN FRENCH IMMERSION CLASS

First Grade students develop their reading and writing skills in French through a balanced literacy approach based on a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts. The *Gafi* reading method is at the center of instruction. It offers a phonic and whole language approach by:

- Using letter/sound correspondence and decoding of syllables and words
- Offering short texts (fiction and non-fiction) to develop comprehension of words and sentences and a love of reading. The fiction section describes the adventures of Gafi, the hero of the collection
- Providing simple reading and writing exercises to acquire vocabulary
- Using text illustrations, posters and visual aids to maximize reading comprehension



 Gafi and his friends

Each *Gafi* lesson focuses on the study of one letter or phoneme (target sound). Gafi's adventures are enhanced and clarified by colorful illustrations, posters, visuals and a collection of small *Gafi* story books (*Les Albums*).

The *Français Facile* method, consisting of two mnemonic phonic workbooks, supplements the *Gafi* collection. Phonics skill instruction is based on a multisensory process that combines hearing, speaking, reading, writing, and kinesthetic reinforcement.

By the end of first grade, French Immersion students will be able to:

- Participate in all Language Arts activities in French
- Demonstrate oral comprehension of teacher's instructions in the target language
- Demonstrate understanding of simple stories and short texts on various familiar topics
- Express in French feelings, needs, understanding and opinions in well-structured and highly contextualized speaking situations
- Use vocabulary and simple sentences related to familiar topics and specific subject areas
- Know the French alphabet and be familiar with most French sounds and diphthongs
- Read and understand short texts and stories (*Gafi* lessons 1-45 and additional reading materials)
- Perform in French most reading and Language Arts skills in well-structured and highly contextualized situations
- Write and read cursive handwriting

With time, the transfer of reading and spelling skills from French to English will come naturally because:

- The ability to discriminate sounds is independent of the language as long as the alphabet is the same
- The process of sorting out the differences between French and English will be emphasized in grade three
- French Immersion students generally start to read high interest material in English as soon as they can

Please see *Frequently Asked Questions* below for more details on reading and writing in French Immersion classes.

Materials

Gafi Textbook and Workbook, Volume 1 (45 lessons)

This reading method, created by the linguist Alain Bentolila, has been the best-selling reading method in French since 2003. Gafi is the hero of the collection. Milton teachers have created supplemental materials to support reading, vocabulary and writing skills.

Le Français Facile - Workbooks 1 & 2

This very effective phonics and writing method was created by Martine Murphy, a teacher and reading specialist, currently teaching First Grade at the Glover School. Phonics skill instruction is based on a multisensory process that combines hearing, speaking, reading, writing, and kinesthetic reinforcement.

Readers' Workshop Collection

This model, introduced during the second part of the school year, allows students to choose from a collection of authentic French texts according to their personal interest and reading level. The main focus is to differentiate and personalize instruction to accommodate the learning needs of all students while fostering a love for reading. Instruction consists of mini-lessons that provide students with precise examples of reading strategies.





Frequently Asked Questions



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Making an Informed Decision: Why French Immersion?



What does French Immersion mean? Do many students have French speaking parents?



French Immersion is a highly successful and well-researched approach to second language learning. It started in Canada more than 30 years ago and has been adopted by many countries around the world. By the end of the program, French Immersion students are expected to master the English language as well as their non-immersion peers, and to possess functional fluency and near native accent in French. They are also expected to demonstrate a broad understanding and appreciation of diversity in general and of francophone cultures in particular.

Immersion is defined as a method of foreign language instruction in which the regular school curriculum is taught through the medium of the target language. That is, the foreign language is the vehicle for content instruction; it is not the subject of instruction itself.

The vast majority of students enrolled in French Immersion do not come from French speaking families. Immersion is designed for students whose first language is not French.

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Why should I put my child in a French Immersion class?



Research supports that the early learning of a new language fosters and develops a child's meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic abilities. While students will be learning the material as outlined by the Massachusetts State Frameworks and the Common Core standards, the immersion experience widens a child's perspective on the world, and also improves the child's understanding of his/her native language. In a global society, knowing and appreciating other languages and cultures is an important asset. For more information and research on the topic, please see the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages at <http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3651>

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My child already speaks another language. Is that a problem?



While most French immersion students are from English speaking homes, we have a small number who come from homes where there is already another language spoken. These students are equally successful in the program.

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At School



The first days of school in the French Immersion Program may generate some anxiety in parents. While this feeling is understandable, it is important to remember that young children are constantly exposed to situations and conversations that they do not understand and manage quite well with this limitation. French immersion teachers are aware of the challenges faced by young first graders. Here are some indications of what a first grade French Immersion class would look like on week one:

- French Immersion teachers speak French from day 1 but answer in English to assist students in need, relieve potential distress or discomfort, or address critical situations
- Students express themselves freely in English and are systematically encouraged to repeat and use key words or expressions in French (*bonjour, merci, les crayons*, etc...)
- Meaningful routines allow students to get familiar with their new surrounding and the target language (daily practice of basic vocabulary: date, calendar, weather, birthdays, numbers, colors, animals, etc.)
- Easy rhymes, songs, and short poems allow students to use the language in complete sentences in a fun way
- Instruction of subject content (language arts, Math, Social Studies and Science) is activity-based. French is used as a real mode of communication to “do real things”

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When does it get easier?



Any transition can be challenging. Going from Kindergarten to first grade is a big step. When students do not understand the language of instruction at the beginning of the year, it is to be expected that they will be unsettled at first. While every child reacts in his/her own way to the experience, do not worry if you witness your child being tired, or frustrated at first. Students will adjust to this new experience with time: they will bond with their teacher, make new friends, and will soon be proud to show you how much they know and how well they do. If you have concerns about your child’s transition, please contact your child’s classroom teacher.

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How much French is spoken every day?



In first grade, 100% of classroom instruction is in French unless safety concerns require the teacher to speak English. At the beginning of the year, while the teacher addresses the class in French, students may respond in English. In a matter of weeks, sometimes days, students will adjust and will increasingly participate in the target language. Starting in January, students will transition to speaking only French as well. Please note that special subjects such as Music, Art, Gym, and Library are taught in English.

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Who is Gafi?



Gafi is the main character in the basic reading program used in the French Immersion first and second grade. The stories revolve around his adventures with his friends Mélanie, Pascale, Arthur, Rachid, and Pacha.

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What support does the school provide for students with learning difficulties?



We are fortunate to have a French Immersion Reading Support Teacher who works with our first and second grade classes. This teacher spends 45 minutes in each classroom twice a week. Your child's teacher and the Reading Support Teacher screen all students and determine who would benefit most from targeted instruction. If your child works with the Reading Support Teacher, you will receive a letter explaining the procedure and requesting your authorization.

If you are concerned about your child's progress, please contact the classroom teacher.

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What will happen to children's skills in English?



Although there are anticipated lags in English Language Arts acquisition early in the program, experience has shown that children make up these delays after formal English instruction is introduced.

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At Home



How can I help my child?



Although you may not speak French, there are many things you can do to help your child:

- Provide a supportive environment, such as a quiet place to do homework. Encourage your child to take his/her time, write neatly, and to put forth his/her best effort
- For homework, please remind your child of the instructions, have them use proper punctuation, and check his/her own work
- Have a CD player so your child can listen to the *Gafi* chapters
- Have your child read aloud to you and provide encouragement by praising his/her efforts
- For comprehension support please do not ask your child to translate the *Gafi* story, but instead ask him/her to tell you the story in his/her own words
- Ask your child to tell you about his/her school day
- Encourage your child to sing the songs learned in the classroom
- Proudly display pieces of work
- Plan visits to the Milton Library and encourage your child to choose French books and videos
- Schedule play dates with other French students
- Set up a reading buddy (perhaps an older sibling or an older French student from your neighborhood)
- Use internet French language resources for children (see list below)

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What happens with reading in English? Can I read in English to my child?



The more a child reads and is read to, the better a reader he/she will become! If your child enters first grade already reading in English, please continue to share English books together and encourage your child to begin looking through and enjoying French books as well. If your child is not reading upon entrance into first grade, **please do not try to teach your child to read in English**. Continue to read aloud in English and to encourage your child to develop a love of literacy, but do not try and teach English phonics—this will interfere and complicate your child’s acquisition of French phonics. Please also note that adding a new language will not have a negative effect on your child’s competence in English; students are surrounded by English 365 days a year.

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What will homework look like?



Math homework, with English instructions, usually starts in the first full week of school. Students are also expected to read their *Gafi* book and listen to the CD for at least 15-20 minutes every day. Students learn by repetition and by reviewing previous material, so please have your child read the story of the week, as well as go over previous chapters.

Starting in January, students will have daily homework centered on weekly spelling words. Weekly spelling tests will start at the same time.

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Why can my child not translate and explain the reading to me word for word?



In immersion, our goal is to foster and develop a new language from the ground up. As such, we do not want students to think of a “pupitre” as a “desk”, but rather as a place where they sit at school and do their work. While it is natural for students to create connections based upon what they already know, they will rapidly move on to understanding directly in the new language, without translating. Encouraging translation will impede this process.

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Can I translate words to help my child with his/her writing?



In an immersion setting, translation impedes development of the new language. In addition, dictionaries and online resources provide translations that are confusing because of a lack of context. Please encourage your child to use words he/she already knows, and to use the picture dictionary that will be provided by the classroom teacher (this will arrive in January). A French-French dictionary is also a good resource, and will be made available at your school's French book fair.

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What supplemental French resources and materials are available for my child and where are they located?



The Milton Public Library carries a selection of materials in French. This collection is in the children's section of the library. Each elementary school library also carries a selection of French books and resources. Many teachers also provide access to Scholastic Canada, a monthly brochure that offers French books for purchase. Every fall, each elementary school holds a French book fair, which is a good place to find dictionaries and other literacy materials. The French Library (L'Alliance Française) is located on Marlborough Street in Boston, and offers programs year round such as camps, clubs, and activities involving the French language. They also have a lending library for members. Some cable packages include a subscription to TV5, a French channel.

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What happens during the summer?



It is important to maintain your child's contact with the French language over the summer. Please refer to the question "how can I help my child" for ideas on how to do this.

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USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.nathan.fr/gafi/>

http://pbskids.org/caillou_french/

<http://www.adibou.com/>

<http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4724>

www.readersworkshop.org

www.actfl.org

Gafi: website: information, games and activities

Caillou: TV cartoon character, games and activities in French

Abidou: Games and activities in French

American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages

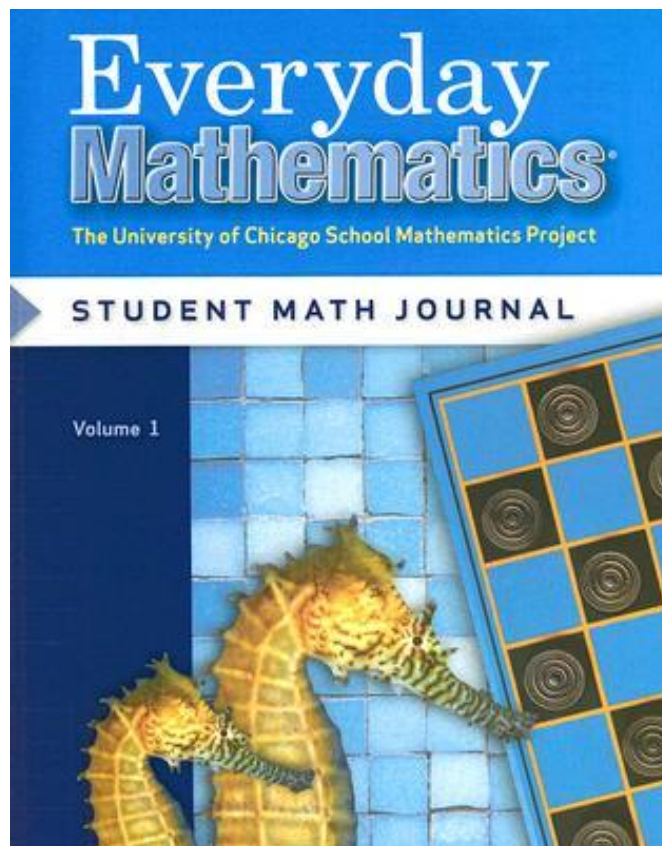
Overview of Reader's Workshop instruction method

Benefits of language learning

MATHEMATICS IN FRENCH IMMERSION CLASSES

By its very nature, the French Immersion Program follows a multi-disciplinary curriculum. The teaching of mathematical, scientific, historical and social concepts in French advances students' linguistic proficiency and enhances the development of their communicative and problem-solving skills. As in Language Arts, instruction includes a wide range of hands-on activities, visual aids and contextualized activities. The presentation of some content may be adapted to meet the needs of students as they are building vocabulary and developing linguistic skills.

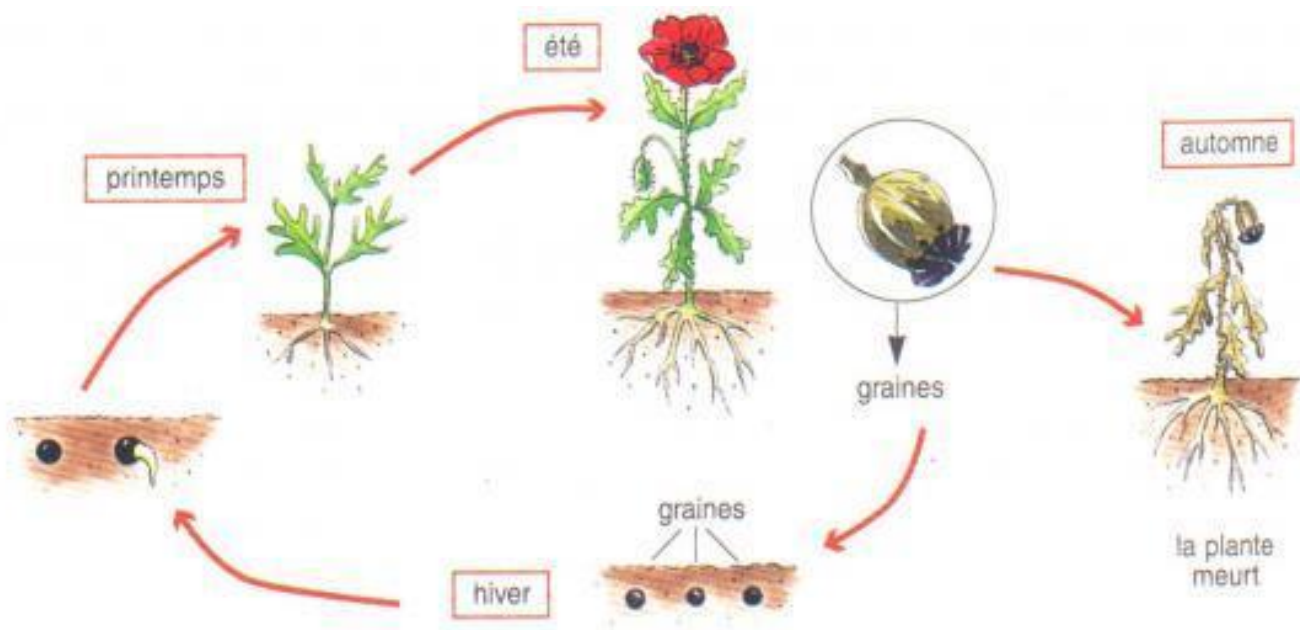
First Grade French Immersion teachers present the *Everyday Math Program* in French following the Milton Public School Curriculum and the Massachusetts Core Standards. Student workbooks and unit assessments have been translated into French. Number skills and mathematics are linked to relevant situations and contexts in everyday life. Immersion students will develop mathematical vocabulary while learning core concepts through hands-on experiences as well as paper and pencil tasks. Homework is in English to allow family support when needed.



SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING

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French Immersion students will learn Science by doing investigations, reading about science, and writing scientific explanations. A wide range of hands-on activities and visual materials will assist French Immersion students in developing content-based skills and knowledge as well as scientific vocabulary.



HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE IN FRENCH IMMERSION CLASSES

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Students will listen to and read folk tales and true stories from America and from around the world. They will learn about major historical events, figures, and symbols related to the United States of America and its national holidays and why they are important.

