

FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM IN THE MILTON SCHOOLS



OVERVIEW

The French Immersion Program started in Milton 25 years ago as an increasing body of research was documenting the undeniable advantage of learning a second language at an early age. The curriculum for the Immersion Program is based on the guidelines of the Milton Public School Curriculum and the Curriculum Frameworks of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the National Frameworks for languages.

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. The American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages¹ offers a clear summary of the latest research on foreign language acquisition. Such an education:

1. Has a powerful effect on children's mental development and cognitive skills
2. Supports academic achievement in other disciplines²
3. Develops near native pronunciation and intonation as well as communicative skills
4. Improves students' understanding of their own native language
5. Gives students an advantage in language requirements for college
6. Positively affects students' attitudes and beliefs about other cultures and other people
7. Increases job opportunities in numerous careers and fields

Instruction in grade one and two is entirely in French for Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Art, Music and Physical Education classes are taught in English³.

In grades three and four, one half of the total instructional time is in French and one half is in English. The Language Arts curriculum which includes comprehension, oral expression, silent and oral reading, spelling, writing, grammar, and vocabulary is taught both in English and French. Social Studies and Science are taught in French. Math is taught in English, as well as Music, Arts, library skills and Physical Education. In grade five, thirty percent of the instruction is in French and seventy percent is in English. Students in French Immersion and English are integrated for Language Arts, Math and Social Studies in English for 70% of the day in all four schools. The remaining 30%, Science and French Language arts, is taught in French.

In grade six, French Immersion students continue their instruction in French Language Arts for one period per day and Social Studies in French for one period per day. In grades seven and eight, French Immersion students study French language for one period per day and are enrolled in a Culture/Humanities class, taught in French, once every other day.

At the High School, students in the Immersion program may take at least one class in French per day. French Immersion students may also complete courses in Advanced Placement Language. Students wishing to claim an internationally recognized certificate will prepare for the *Diploma of Studies of the French Language*. High School students may also choose an additional language beginning in grade nine, thereby giving them the opportunity to take additional Advanced Placement classes in Spanish or Latin.

¹ ACTFL: <http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3653#FLES>. See also: *CAL Center for Applied Linguistic* at <http://www.cal.org/topics/fl>, and *Nanduti* at http://www.cal.org/earlylang/benefits/benefits_of_being_bilingual.html

² There is documented positive correlation between Math and Verbal SAT scores and the study of foreign languages.

³ See detailed description of curriculum at: http://www.edline.net/pages/Milton_Public_Schools (Select Departments)