

WHEN DOES FORMAL READING INSTRUCTION BEGIN IN FRENCH IMMERSION?

Reading is a developmental process and all readers progress at different rates and have different needs. When children begin to read in English in Grade 1, teachers closely monitor progress and offer targeted supports when necessary. These supports may include explicit teaching to help students:

- develop the alphabetic principle and phonological awareness;
- develop phonemic awareness;
- develop vocabulary, academic and social language;
- improve listening skills;
- learn and apply comprehension strategies;
- engage in meaningful writing experiences;
- practice reading skills at school and at home.

The development of a student's reading skills in English is a strong predictor of success when reading in French. Based on the child's progress in English reading, teachers can therefore anticipate what the student will need to be successful when reading in French and focus instruction on developing French oral vocabulary, knowledge of how the French language is structured, and sound and word knowledge through nursery rhymes, poems, and songs as well as explicit teaching.

In Grade 2, when formal reading instruction begins, supports for French reading will be similar to those offered to readers in English in Grade 1.

As independent reading in French in Grade 1 is NOT an expectation, student progress in reading should be assessed as per the expectations outlined in the *français* curriculum as well as based on the *Subject Categories and Descriptions—Grades 1 to 8* section in the Manitoba Provincial Report Card Policy and Guidelines document (p. 54). **Interventions targeting formal reading instruction in French are not warranted.**

WHAT ABOUT WRITING IN FRENCH IN THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM?

Reading and writing are complementary thinking processes that involve the construction of meaning. These two processes should be taught concurrently to help develop, transfer, and reinforce the knowledge of: letter-sound connections, how stories or texts are built, and notions relating to intention and purpose of language as well as audience. Through writing for real purposes and for real audiences, children learn to manipulate language, allowing them to discover and to examine how the language works. This knowledge is later reinforced and reinvested when students communicate orally or read.

As children begin to participate in modelled reading, shared reading, guided reading and independent reading, they should simultaneously be engaged in modelled writing, shared writing, guided writing, and independent writing. The gradual release of responsibility thus follows a similar pattern for both processes.

The teacher models, the child observes	The teacher models and teaches, the teacher and student practice together	The student practices with others, the teacher helps and coaches	The student practices on his own, the teacher observes and gives feedback
<i>I do, you watch</i>	<i>I do, you help</i>	<i>You do, I help</i>	<i>You do, I watch</i>
modelled reading	shared reading	guided reading	independent reading
modelled writing	shared writing	guided writing	independent writing

Kindergarten

Grade 1

As with reading, independent writing in French in Kindergarten and in Grade 1 is NOT a curricular expectation.

WHAT DOES HOME READING LOOK LIKE IN KINDERGARTEN AND IN GRADE 1?

Students will take home a number of different books in both French and English for a variety of different purposes or to target different goals set by and with the teacher.

What's in the student's home reading book bag in Kindergarten and Grade 1?	What are the possible goals or purposes of home reading for the student?
French or English books that the student has chosen either from the classroom or school library and that are usually beyond their reading ability. (Kindergarten & Grade 1)	These allow opportunities for K & Gr. 1 students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To choose books according to personal interests; • To be read to by parents; • To share and explore books with family members; • To reinforce reading behaviours such as looking for details/clues in illustrations.
French books that have been chosen by the teacher. (Kindergarten & Grade 1)	These allow opportunities for K & Gr. 1 students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To engage in activities such as counting the number of sentences on a page, identifying the capital letters and periods in sentences, counting the number of words in a sentence, etc; • To read the illustrations and to talk about the story page by page; • To retell the story using their own words or words they recognize in the text; • To share their favourite books that have previously been read by the teacher; • To read stories which have been written collectively by the students and that have been previously practised during choral reading.
English books that have been chosen by the teacher. (Grade 1)	These allow opportunities for Gr. 1 students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To talk about the stories, illustrations, etc.; • To practice reading familiar books; • To develop fluency and confidence.

IF A STUDENT IS STRUGGLING IN READING IN THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM, SHOULD HE/SHE REMAIN IN FRENCH IMMERSION?

Yes. With appropriate supports, students can be successful in reading in English and in French. If a child is struggling in reading in English, transferring the student to the English Program will not make his/her academic difficulties disappear. Research findings pertaining to the English skills of immersion students indicate that after an initial lag lasting until a year or two after English language arts is introduced, early French immersion students perform as well in English as or better than their English Program counterparts*. Learning to read in English and in French allows students to benefit from the links that exist between the two languages and provides students with added exposure to literacy thus mutually reinforcing literacy skills in both languages.

"Teachers and administrators must ensure that appropriate services are in place for [...] students, and they must debunk the myth that transfer to an English program will remediate the problem."
(French Immersion in Manitoba: A Handbook for School Leaders)

* Adapted from: Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, *French Immersion in Manitoba: A Handbook for School Leaders*, Winnipeg, MECY, 2007, p. 2-7.

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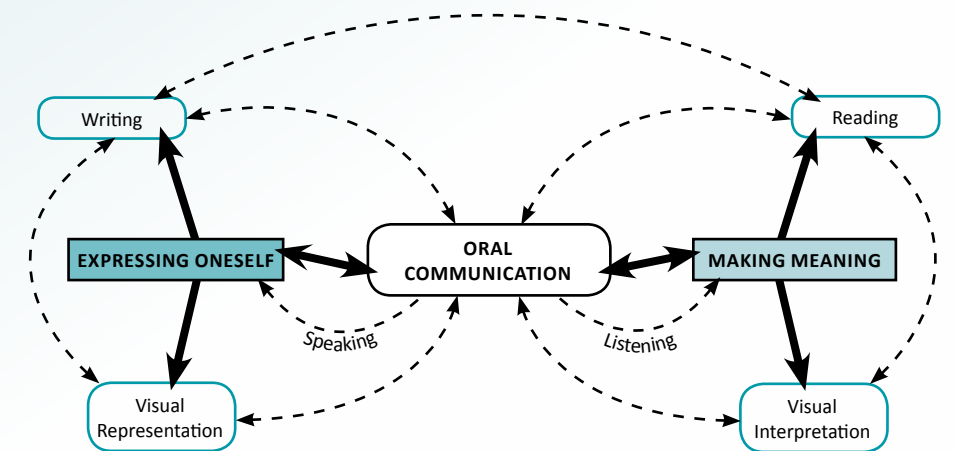
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READING IN THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM (K-2)

DEVELOPING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING

This document has been created with the goal of developing a common understanding regarding literacy and the importance of French language development in Kindergarten to Grade 2 in French Immersion as well as to establish expectations and practices which should be communicated and shared by all educators.

In the French Immersion Program, French oral communication is at the center of all learning that occurs and is the foundation on which literacy skills are developed. To read and to be able to understand what is read, students need to possess a solid language base which includes knowledge of vocabulary and language structures. As students arrive in the French Immersion Program, they generally arrive with a relatively solid base in English; however, they have little or no language experiences in French. This reality has a significant impact on the expectations that are set for reading by emergent readers in English Language Arts and in French. Expectations for emergent readers in French and English reflect the particular needs and demands of second language acquisition.



WHEN DOES FORMAL READING INSTRUCTION BEGIN IN FRENCH IMMERSION?

In the English Program, students begin formal reading instruction in Grade 1. In French Immersion, students receive informal reading instruction in Kindergarten and Grade 1. Formal reading instruction in French begins in Grade 2.

	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2
ELA – Immersion French Immersion		Formal reading instruction	
French French Immersion	Informal reading instruction		Formal reading instruction

WHY DOES FORMAL READING IN FRENCH BEGIN IN GRADE 2 IN FRENCH IMMERSION?

Language development in one's first language is essential to learning, and plays a crucial role in the later development of successful readers. During their early years, children learn about themselves, language, and books, by being in constant interaction with others and their community, through play, and by being read to by others. These types of early experiences set the stage and prepare children for reading.

For most children who enter the French Immersion Program, their early language experiences occur in English. Therefore, by the time they reach Grade 1, they have been exposed to English oral language and to print for up to 6 years in their homes and in their environment. This exposure usually provides the necessary language skills for the development of reading in English in Grade 1.

During a student's first two years in French Immersion, priority must be given to the development of French oral language. To do so requires a significant amount of time. However, this investment of time provides a necessary and solid base for the future development of the student's literacy skills.

Although students who attend half-day Kindergarten in French are exposed to the French language and begin to acquire basic vocabulary and language structures, this exposure is yet not adequate for formal reading at the beginning of Grade 1. It is essential that children be given sufficient time to acquire and understand the complexity of letters and sounds, new vocabulary and new language structures associated with the French language as these are foundational for reading and reading comprehension.

The development of these French language skills therefore needs to continue throughout Grade 1 so that students may be able to read and understand what they will be independently reading by the end of Grade 2. In Kindergarten and Grade 1, it would be unfair to expect students to respond to questions in French such as 'Does it look right?', 'Does it sound right?' or 'Does it make sense?' considering they have not yet been given sufficient time to learn the French language and do not yet have the necessary language or language skills to reflect appropriately on these questions.

Students may become very skillful at decoding texts once they master the sound and symbol connections. However, there is more to reading than decoding. Reading encompasses understanding ideas and information that are found in print. In order to be able to make meaning of print and to comprehend its intended message, students require sufficient French vocabulary and a solid grasp of how the French language works.

WHO DECIDES WHEN FORMAL READING SHOULD BEGIN IN FRENCH IMMERSION?

The Manitoba K to 12 *Français* curriculum for French Immersion outlines expectations for reading instruction in French. In accordance with these learning expectations, students engage in informal reading instruction in Kindergarten and Grade 1 and in formal reading instruction beginning in Grade 2. Communication to parents pertaining to reading expectations as well as progress communicated regularly to parents throughout the school year and in the Provincial Report Card should closely adhere to the mandated learning expectations. **All school divisions are accountable to the Manitoba provincial curriculum.**

WHAT IS MEANT BY INFORMAL AND FORMAL READING INSTRUCTION IN FRENCH IMMERSION? WHAT DOES EACH LOOK LIKE?

Many of the prereading skills taught in French in Kindergarten also prepare students for reading in English. Informal reading practices listed below and used by teachers occur beyond Kindergarten and Grade 1. These practices benefit all students at all grade levels regardless of the language.

INFORMAL READING INSTRUCTION IN FRENCH IN KINDERGARTEN AND GRADE 1

	What kind of reading is done?	What does this look like?	Why is it important?
KINDERGARTEN	Reading Wordless Picture Books	The teacher encourages the students to use the pictures in the book and their imagination to create their own story.	Reading Wordless Picture Books: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops vocabulary and oral language; Provides an opportunity for rich conversations; Provides an opportunity for connecting experiences; Demonstrates that the story and the pictures are connected; Increases an awareness of how authors construct stories.
	Read Alouds Modelled Reading	The teacher reads a variety of illustrated print texts (<i>i.e. Big Books, story books, classroom charts, etc.</i>) to students for different purposes and to model different strategies and processes.	Read Alouds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops concepts about print; Develops an ear for the vocabulary and structures of language; Develops vocabulary and oral language; Provides an opportunity for rich conversations; Promotes a love of reading, stimulate the imagination, and help students develop a sense of story; Encourages students to make connections with prior knowledge and make predictions; Allows teachers to model connections between oral language, reading and writing.
	Echo Reading	The teacher reads words or a sentence that the students repeat.	Echo Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops an ear for the French language and its sounds; Improves awareness of sounds; Provides models for appropriate pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, and phrasing.
	Choral Reading	The teacher and students read aloud in unison as a group.	Choral Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops listening skills and an ear for vocabulary and structures of language; Provides models for appropriate pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, and phrasing; Helps build students' fluency, self-confidence, and motivation.
GRADE 1	Shared Reading	The teacher and students read a text interactively.	Shared Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides an opportunity for rich conversations; Allows students to participate in and enjoy books with repetitive structures; Allows students to experience the teacher's rereading of books with different instructional intentions; Allows students to use vocabulary and oral language in a meaningful way; Allows students to see themselves as readers; Provides students with a non-threatening environment for risk-taking around new and familiar reading strategies; Allows the teacher to model and talk about reading and comprehension strategies; Allows teachers to model connections between oral language, reading and writing.

FORMAL READING INSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH IN GRADE 1, AND IN FRENCH IN GRADE 2

What kind of reading is done?	What does this look like?	Why is it important?
Guided Reading	The teacher introduces a variety of texts at the student's instructional level. The student does the reading and practices strategies.	Guided Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows students to use vocabulary and oral language in a meaningful way; Engages students in "talk around the text" to activate prior knowledge, deepen understanding, and express ideas; Provides opportunities for goal-setting; Teaches reading and comprehension strategies and offers students the opportunity to select appropriate strategies when problem-solving; Allows the teacher to monitor individual students' progress and to plan next steps for students' learning; Helps students to see themselves as readers and teaches them to make appropriate book selections; Provides opportunities to use mistakes as a part of learning; Allows teachers to model connections between oral language, reading, and writing.
Independent Reading	Students read independently. The student chooses texts independently for academic purposes or for pleasure.	Independent Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows students to choose texts on topics that interest them and to read for enjoyment; Allows students to make connections between oral language, reading, and writing; Allows readers to use comprehension strategies and problem-solving 'on the run'.

HOW DOES READING IN ENGLISH IN GRADE 1 BENEFIT READING IN FRENCH IN GRADE 2?

The knowledge the learner has of his or her first language is transferred to and interacts with the knowledge he or she is acquiring in the second language. Educators need to be aware of the **transfers and interferences** that occur and capitalize on the knowledge and skills that learners can transfer from English to French. "For example, a learner who is read to as a child before entering school will understand the concept that meaning is embedded in the print and in the illustrations of the story. Upon entering French Immersion Kindergarten, the teacher will read to the child in French. Although the child may not understand all the vocabulary in the story, he or she approaches the learning situation with the knowledge that the purpose of reading is constructing meaning from text. The child in this case makes a transfer from his understanding of literacy in English to his understanding of literacy in French." (French Immersion in Manitoba: A Handbook for School Leaders).

The following knowledge, skills, and attitudes can also be transferred from English to French:

- Knowledge of the alphabet, although identical in appearance they differ greatly phonetically;
- Decoding, word recognition, and spelling skills;
- Knowledge of how words are constructed (phonemic awareness);
- Concepts about print;
- Reading and comprehension strategies;
- Story or text structures;
- Notions of intention, purpose and audience;
- Background, cultural knowledge, and prior experiences needed to make connections, infer, and visualize;
- Critical thinking skills and goal setting;
- Risk-taking, perseverance, and confidence.

However, students acquiring the French language cannot be expected to make these transfers instantaneously from one language to the next and therefore, Grade 1 students should not be expected to read in French according to the same expectations as they would be expected to read in English. Students need time to make these transfers through gradual experiences with the French language and with intentional and explicit teaching. Interferences between English and French must also be taught as these can pose challenges for beginning readers. (*Examples of interferences are: letters that look the same but have different names or represent different sounds; word order in sentences that is different; letters which are silent when speaking in French, but appear in writing; sounds that can be represented in many written ways – i.e. 'o' can be written as 'o, eau, au, aux, or ô.*)

It is important to "Provide learners who have not yet learned to read in any language with beginning reading instruction in a language in which they are competent."

(Commission on Reading of the National Council of Teachers of English, 2008, pp. 3 & 4)