

French as a Second Language

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why was the decision made to move to a randomized lottery for Grade 1 French Immersion (FI) applications?

As part of the policy and procedure review cycle, the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) reviewed the FI policies and procedures in September 2019. During this process, the SCDSB investigated current practices for FI applications to Grade 1. Based on feedback and careful consideration, it was determined that a randomized lottery application process provided:

- alignment with many other school boards across the province
- a more equitable entry opportunity for families who apply
- a longer online application timeframe
- reduced pressure of completing a time sensitive application

The online application window will be open for a three-week period prior to the winter holidays. Dates will be listed on the public website under Elementary/French as a Second Language.

2. Will my child be given priority because they have an older sibling already in the program?

No. The SCDSB strives to ensure all processes and programs are equitable to all students, including those entering the FI program; therefore, priority is not given to students with older siblings in the program.

3. Is transportation provided for students in FI and Extended French as a Second Language (EFSL)?

- Transportation is available for students enrolled in FI or EFSL programs within their designated French site where the student resides outside the walk zone for that school.
- Centralized community bus stops will be established to provide access for students to attend the specialized program.
- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to transport the student to and from the centralized stops at designated times for pick up and drop off.
- The locations of the centralized community bus stops will be communicated to parents once they are determined.
- Maximum bus travel times currently established under board policy will not apply to bus routes transporting children to FI and EFSL programs. It is possible that your child's bus ride may exceed 60 minutes one way.
- Maximum walking distances to bus stops currently established under board policy will not apply to program buses transporting children to FI and EFSL programs. It is possible that your child's walking distance to their community bus stop may exceed 1.6 km for Elementary or 3.2 for Secondary.
- Parents/guardians must write a letter to request that younger siblings (Grade 4 or younger) can disembark from the bus with older siblings at community collection points.

4. How is my child's designated Grade 1 FI site determined?

During the online application process, you are required to provide your current address. This address is used to determine the FI site that your child is eligible to attend. During the school admission process, assuming your application is successful, you will be required to provide proof of address (property tax assessment, lease/rental agreement, ownership title, utility bill, letter of residency, purchase agreement for primary residence, or statutory declaration) as a final step to program admission.

5. I moved to the area after the Grade 1 online application closed. Can I still apply for FI?

Yes. You can still apply for Grade 1 admission. After the online application closes, families can complete the FI Request form on the public website (under Elementary, then French as a Second Language, then French Immersion-elementary). FI Request forms must be submitted directly to your designated FI site. If the classes are full, your child will be placed on the waitlist.

6. What if I come from another board where my child was in FI? Can I apply for FI?

Yes. Entry will be determined based on available space at your designated FI site. If space is not available your child will be placed on the waitlist. It is important to note that not every school board's FI/EFSL program in Ontario is the same. Some FI programs begin in SK with 50%, others begin in Grade 1 with 100%. Some FI students never learn math in French while others may begin math in French and transition to English in later years. A transition conversation with the school's principal will be required. Please contact your school for more information.

7. What if my child does not have French experience and they did not start FI at the beginning of Grade 1? Can I apply for FI?

Yes. Entry will be determined based on available space at your designated FI site. If space is not available, your child will be placed on the waitlist. It is important to note that not every school board's FI/EFSL program in Ontario is the same. Some FI programs begin in SK with 50%, while others begin in Grade 1 with 100%. Some FI students never learn math in French, while others may begin math in French and transition to English in later years. A transition conversation with the school's principal will be required. Please contact your school for more information.

8. Can I apply for my child to attend a program at a different location?

All schools offering FI are currently closed to Out-of-Attendance Area requests, unless otherwise noted in the Capital Plan as approved by the Board; therefore, students are required to attend the designated FI or EFSL school based on their home address.

9. Will my child stay at the same school for the duration of the program?

Not necessarily. Program locations may change during your child's time in the program and your child may need to move schools. Sometimes these changes happen because of limited space at schools. If a move is needed, transition planning will take place. The quality of your child's educational experience will not be impacted. Families and schools can work together to help make any change a positive experience for students.

10. What happens at the secondary level?

Thirty (30) secondary school credits are required for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). Currently, one secondary credit in French is required for an OSSD. If your child continues in the FI or EFSL program at the secondary level, a total of 10 French credits are required for your child to receive a Certificate of French Immersion Studies and 7 credits are required to earn an EFSL Certificate of completion.

11. Does a parent/guardian need to speak French for their child to be successful?

No. Parents/guardians do not need to be able to speak French for their children to be enrolled in the FI programs. As with all programs, it is important that a positive relationship between home and school be maintained.

12. How will I know if my child will be successful in second language learning?

As with all programs, positive learning experiences occur when students are encouraged at school and at home to enjoy second language learning. Children are successful learners when they are supported and motivated.

13. Are English language skills affected by FI?

Studies have shown that second language learning enhances a child's first language. It is normal for FI students' language development to slow down in the early years as they learn to manage two languages. Children learn to speak, read and write in French using the same language development as in English. Many of the sounds are similar while others are unique. Research shows that most children's dual language proficiency stabilizes by Grade 6. There is research to support that bilingual student outperform monolinguals in many subjects. It is expected that families will read with their child in English at home as students will not be exposed to English language instruction until Grade 3 in our FI program.

14. My child has special learning needs. Should I consider FI?

Children of all abilities can be successful in FI. Special education support is delivered in English and may be delivered in French where qualified staff are available.

15. What special education supports are available for my child?

Students with special education needs have the support of the classroom teacher and, where appropriate, the special education resource teacher (SERT). While resource support may be delivered in English or French (if available), recommended learning strategies are implemented by the classroom teacher in French.

16. Will my child follow the same curriculum that they would follow in English?

Yes. All program and course materials are based on the Ontario Curriculum policy documents.

17. What type of French will be taught in the classroom?

Standard French vocabulary and structures are taught in all French programs. A variety of accents exist in all languages. Teachers are required to expose students to the many social and geographical varieties of French so they can develop an understanding and appreciation of the diversity within French-speaking cultures.

18. What language do FI students write the EQAO assessments in?

In the SCDSB, Grade 3 students write the mathematics assessment in French because 100% of the SCDSB's mathematics instruction is in French until Grade 5. Students will not write the language assessment in Grade 3. By Grade 6, all FI students have had enough English language instruction to allow them to complete the EQAO reading, writing and mathematics assessments in English.

19. Will communication for the school (e.g. report cards) be in English or in French?

All communication from the school will be in English.

20. Why was the decision made to phase out the Extended French program?

The strongest factor that influenced the decision to phase out the Extended French program is staffing. There are a limited number of qualified French as a Second Language teachers within the province. Another factor is the available space within our facilities.

21. Is there a cost to parents for student participation in FI?

There is no additional cost for families with students in the FI program.

22. English is not our first language, and we don't speak English at home. Will this affect our child's learning in French Immersion?

No. In Grades 1 and 2, the language of instruction is French, and no English ability is required to be successful. You can support your child's learning by reading with them and talking about school in your family's first language.

23. How can I have my questions answered?

Please contact your child's principal or email your questions to fsl@scdsb.on.ca.