Language Arts in French Immersion

Introduction

Philosophy and Rationale

What Is French Immersion Programming in Alberta?

French immersion programming in Alberta aims to promote the French language and Francophone cultures. This program of choice reflects Canada’s social and historical contexts. In an immersive setting, learning multiple subjects in French fosters the development of students’ ability to communicate, thus providing the opportunity to become bilingual. These abilities, developed in French, are often transferrable from one language to another, and therefore reinforce the development of the students’ first language.

What Is French Language Arts?

The French language arts program of studies serves to develop language that is essential for establishing meaningful connections with others. As an interdisciplinary subject, it draws inspiration from linguistics, socio-cultural studies, media studies, and the literary, dramatic, and visual arts. A defining characteristic of this subject is that the French language is regarded as both a communication tool and as a pathway for learning.

To facilitate opportunities for authentic interactions in French language arts, oral and written production and comprehension are closely interconnected. In this way, the various modes of communication can happen concurrently and support one another. An emphasis on the interactive nature of language learning in this program simulates language acquisition in a natural environment and, as such, exposure to quality models of French are vital to the success of the program.

Considering that students in French language arts are not typically exposed to the French language in their home environments and during activities outside of school, explicit instruction in building vocabulary plays a key role. With a well-established vocabulary base, students learn to understand and create a variety of messages to express themselves. Furthermore, in order to communicate with intent, students learn to choose various text structures to convey their thoughts in purposeful ways. As a result, students are empowered with choice in their methods of expression. For communication to be most effective, social and cultural aspects of language also need to be considered. Understanding the art of purposefully selecting language to suit a particular audience, to create a particular effect, or to present a certain perspective is a significant goal of this program of studies.

Through interactions in French language arts, students have opportunities to appreciate, influence, shape, and contribute to society. Additionally, word choice and means of expression become defining elements of students’ identities, equipping them to interact in French in diverse contexts.

Why Is French Language Arts Important?

French language arts provides students with the opportunity to experience various contemporary and historical texts through which they may discover the many cultures of Canada and the world. In doing so, students make connections between these texts and
their own experiences, expanding on their ways of knowing, living, and being in the world. By exploring various perspectives and celebrating the contributions of diverse communities, students develop their personal identity and form interpersonal relationships.

French language arts contributes to educating engaged citizens who are open to other languages and cultures. Moreover, students gain an appreciation of Francophone cultures and of the usefulness and beauty of the French language. Above all, students develop the ability to communicate with fluency and accuracy in a variety of contexts, enabling them to learn, live, and work in French.

Inclusive Education

The flexibility of the French language arts program makes it possible to meet the diverse learning needs of students so that they can maximize their potential. This flexibility facilitates differentiated instruction in order to give students a number of ways to participate, be engaged in, represent, and express their learning. The French language arts program values diversity to enable students to develop a sense of belonging in the immersion setting.

The success of the French language arts program requires engagement by all stakeholders who share the responsibility for students’ success in an inclusive setting. Students receive equitable* and holistic** supports so that they may demonstrate their learning in their own way.

*equitable: based on the individual’s needs

**holistic: taking into account the student’s physical, mental, emotional, family, social, cultural, spiritual, and academic dimensions

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Experiences and Perspectives

The French language arts program of studies incorporates perspectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit in historical and contemporary contexts. This program of studies presents these perspectives and explores their connections with the Francophone communities of Alberta, Canada, and the world. The French language arts program includes:

- historical and contemporary perspectives;
- contributions, origins, and events, including treaties, residential schools and their legacy;
- rights and the preservation of cultures; and
- ancestral languages and histories of Indigenous peoples.

In order to support reconciliation, the French language arts program of studies examines the importance of First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories and their ways of knowing through the study of a variety of authentic means of expression.
Francophone Cultures and Perspectives

The French language arts program aims to bring the French language and Francophone cultures to life in a variety of contexts and situations. To better understand diverse francophone perspectives, students use art, literary texts, and everyday texts to explore:

- the rich diversity of the French language, its expressions, accents, and regional variations;
- cultural references of Francophones in Alberta, Canada, and around the world; and
- the origins and histories of Francophones and their contributions to society in Alberta, Canada, and the world.

The French language arts program enables students to develop French language skills and an interest in Francophone cultures and communities, and offers them opportunities for further learning, experiences, and connections to Francophone communities in French as bilingual Canadians.

Literacy

Language learning is essential to understanding in all subject areas. In an immersion setting, literacy* is an integral part of language arts that students use to appreciate and enrich their French. Although most of the knowledge and skills encompassed by literacy are initially taught in language arts classes, they are reinforced in in all other subjects and disciplines. In French language arts, students learn and apply literacy as they interpret, comprehend, and create oral, print, visual, and multimodal texts for a range of audiences and purposes in a variety of contexts or situations. As a result, students are able to participate in various activities in French and have meaningful experiences both at school and in everyday life. Literacy awareness, knowledge, and understanding in French language arts is the foundation for lifelong learning and active participation in society.

*Literacy is the ability, confidence, and willingness to engage with language to acquire, construct, and communicate meaning in all aspects of daily living.

Numeracy

Numeracy* in French language arts enriches the study of the subject and is developed when students interact with quantitative and spatial information in the context of language experiences. When the quantitative and spatial concepts specific to French language arts are made explicit, students see how they can transfer their mathematical understandings and relevant vocabulary in purposeful ways. Students’ comprehension of oral, print, visual, and multimodal texts is strengthened when they use their numeracy skills to identify the rhythm of a speech or interpret data and graphs, for example. When constructing texts, students use numeracy when organizing information on a screen or a page, sequencing ideas, designing story maps and incorporating visual representations.

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Numeracy awareness, knowledge, and understanding enhance students’ comprehension of the texts, ideas, and perspectives explored in French language arts. They strengthen students’ ability to communicate effectively and help them make informed decisions in all aspects of daily living, whether at home or at school.

*Numeracy is the ability, confidence, and willingness to engage with quantitative and spatial information to make informed decisions in all aspects of daily living.

Competencies

Competencies are combinations of attitudes, skills, and knowledge that students develop and apply for successful learning, living, and working. They emphasize aspects of learning that apply within and across all subjects. Alberta’s Kindergarten to Grade 12 learning outcomes in French language arts provide contexts for students to apply and develop the following competencies:

- Critical Thinking
- Problem Solving
- Managing Information
- Creativity and Innovation
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Cultural and Global Citizenship
- Personal Growth and Well-being

For more information, go to Competencies in French Language Arts.