

## **French Language Schools in Surrey**

### ***Context***

The Surrey School District is the largest in B.C. with more than 71,000 students, 101 elementary schools, 19 secondary schools, five learning centres and three adult education centres.

The district provides three French language programs; French Immersion, French as a Second Language and Intensive French. It is worth noting that in 2004, the Surrey School District became the first district in B.C. to offer Intensive French.

French language programs within the Surrey School District:

### **French Immersion**

Early French Immersion (Kindergarten – Grade 7) 7 Schools

Late French Immersion (Grades 6-7) 5 Schools

Secondary French Immersion (Grades 8-12) 4 Schools

### **Intensive French**

Intensive French is a literacy-based second language program in which French is taught intensively for the first five months of Grade 6, with a continuation of one hour of French per day in the second five months, as well as throughout Grade 7.

There are 5 elementary schools offering Intensive French.

There is a follow-up to Intensive French called “Enhanced French” at secondary school, where students continue to study French at a higher level.

There are 3 secondary schools offering Enhanced French.

### **French as a Second Language**

Grades 4-7

Grades 8-12

French as a Second Language is available to students across the district.

### ***Challenges: General***

The main challenge for all school districts in B.C. in maintaining and growing French language programs is recruiting and retaining qualified French language teachers.

Geography is an important factor: B.C. is furthest from Canada's French-speaking provinces, as well as French-speaking countries. Teachers with proper credentials, as well as a comprehensive proficiency and understanding of the language and inherent cultural nuances generally do not want to be far from home and families; particularly new, young graduates.

### ***Challenges: Surrey School District***

The foremost and unique challenge for Surrey relates to space availability. The district has been growing steadily for more than 25 years and in many years, by more than 1,000 students.

This growth severely limits the ability of the district to make space available for any program of choice, including French Immersion, since providing space for children living within the neighbourhood or school "catchment", is the first priority and schools in several areas of the district are well over capacity.

Related to our growth challenge is a strong preference by parents to have their child attend French Immersion only if it's available in a nearby school.

To illustrate, a new French Immersion program was introduced two years ago at a school with space to accommodate it. Despite personally contacting and offering a seat in the new program to the parents of all 220-plus students on the district-wide waiting list, the new program attracted only six students and initially could not proceed. A renewed effort to fill the seats a year later has resulted in 14 registrations and the program began this school year.

### ***Quality French Immersion teaching initiatives***

#### ***Quality French language program initiatives***

Our district works with local universities to assist in promoting French specialization in education; however, the number of graduates with this skill and certification doesn't meet demand.