



French Immersion at Lakeland Catholic Offers Students Countless Opportunities



BONNYVILLE - Students who attend Lakeland Catholic Schools have been receiving quality French Immersion programming for over 40 years. Currently, six of the seven schools in this District offer French Immersion. In Cold Lake Holy Cross Elementary, St. Dominic, and Assumption Jr/Sr High schools offer French Immersion while in Bonnyville the program is offered at Notre Dame Elementary, Dr. Bernard Brosseau, and Notre Dame High schools.

Lakeland Catholic is committed to providing quality French programming, beginning with French introduction in preschool, and moving into full-day French Immersion in Kindergarten. Nearly one third of the students registered in this District are enrolled in the French Immersion program.

In the early immersion years, students learn to be very good listeners. They are encourage to speak French all the time, but during the first couple of years they may use English to express complex thoughts for which they have not yet learned the required French words. Students may not always speak French outside of the classroom, but may use French sounds and words at play and sing French songs learned during class while interacting with friends. Children will listen to French being spoken by the teacher before they are expected to fully comprehend it.

In a typical French immersion classroom, the 'gentle approach' is used. The teacher uses French all of the time, speaking in English only if a student's health or safety is at risk. Gestures, mime, pictures and objects are used to help children understand. Very quickly, through watching and listening, the students begin to recognize words and phrases, responding appropriately.

In Kindergarten, children are fully immersed in the French culture in order to provide them with the best start to their French language learning. In kindergarten to grade 2, French instruction accounts for 90-100% of the day, grades 3-6 around 80%, grades 7-9 between 70-80% and in grades 10-12 French instruction accounts for 25% of the school day.

Lakeland Catholic's French Immersion program follows the same Alberta curriculum as its English equivalent, including English Language Arts for French Immersion students. Research shows that students in French Immersion develop enhanced listening and learning skills, and improved communications skills. The most positive impact occurs when a student begins their French learning experience at a young age.

Research has shown that second language students score higher on both verbal and non-verbal intelligence, are superior in divergent thinking tasks and in memory ability and attention span. They also have on average, higher test scores in reading, language and mathematics. Learning a second language also helps a child develop cross-cultural skills and have greater cultural sensitivity.

While Lakeland Catholic's French Immersion program begins in Kindergarten, children are still able to enroll at a later grade. While it is easiest for them to begin with their peers, a child will never be turned away. Students enrolling at a later grade can find success in the program, with the supports needed in place.

Cultural and Language Learning Opportunities



During a student's educational journey through French Immersion, there is a plethora of opportunities and experiences available to them. Language is only one aspect of the French Immersion experience, with culture being equally important. Students take part in French cultural activities such as "Cabane à Sucre, Québec", various plays, Bonhomme Carnaval, French movie experiences, and

cultural days to name a few. At the Junior High and High School level, students also have cultural trips available to them, such as the Junior High trip to Quebec, which takes place every two years, and a Senior High trip to France.

When students graduate from High School with French Immersion, they receive a bilingual certificate from the school, marking their accomplishments. Following High School, students from our program have gone on to been successful in French post-secondary education, with some past students even returning to our District to teach French Immersion to current students.

French does not stop at the classroom door. All Lakeland Catholic schools include French Immersion components in their day-to-day activities, such as during morning announcements, prayer, assemblies, celebrations, and even when students are walking

down the halls. French posters and displays can be seen on the walls of our schools, helping all students learn and appreciate the French language and culture.

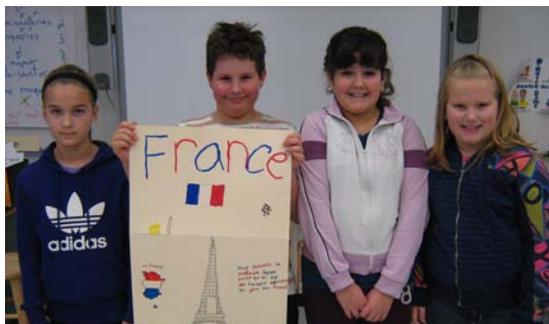
Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELF)

Recently, two of our French Immersion teachers went through the process to become accredited administrators of the *Diplôme d'études en langue française* (DELF). Vice-Principal at Assumption Jr/Sr High, Chantal Sakowich, and Assumption French Immersion Teacher, Kareen Gilbert took part in a training course in Edmonton to become certified administrators. With there only being 8 official writing centers in Alberta for this exam, Lakeland Catholic has affiliated itself with Edmonton Catholic Schools. Lakeland Catholic is also the only District in our area who have teachers certified to administer this exam to students.

DELF diplomas are francophone diplomas awarded to students from the National Ministry of Education of France, and are recognized around the world. DELF officially certifies the ability of a student to use French in real-life situations, and includes listening, reading, writing and speaking components. Once a student receives their DELF diploma, it remains with them for life. It provides students with additional education advantages, such as providing them with the credentials to apply for employment positions where there is a French Language requirement. Students with a DELF are also recognized as having high enough French language skills to be accepted into any francophone University in the world.

Recently, the first group of students from Lakeland Catholic wrote the DELF exams, and results from these exams will be available to students shortly. The DELF exams are available to students both in Cold Lake and Bonnyville. It does not replace the mandatory French Language Arts 30 exam required by Grade 12 French Immersion students. DELF is voluntary and therefore is only written if the student chooses to do so.

Professional, Experienced Staff



The French Immersion program in Lakeland Catholic Schools is extremely well established. With our 40 plus years experience, we are well aware of the challenges and hurdles which need to be met in order to have a successful program.

One of the key factors to our program is our bilingual and experienced teachers dedicated to teaching our students the French language.

As previously mentioned, some of our teachers are graduates from our French Immersion program, which is a testament to the level of instruction students receive. We

recruit French Immersion teachers from all over Canada with many being of Francophone backgrounds. Lakeland Catholic has always seen the benefit of Professional Development, and staff are given every opportunity to keep up-to-date on cutting edge instructional strategies in the classroom.

On top of experienced and extremely qualified instructional staff, Lakeland Catholic also has a strong support team to help students through the French Immersion program. Technology plays an integral role in education and in the classroom experience. With all our classrooms being equipped with SMARTboards and lap top carts, students are constantly able to access a multitude of programming to help enhance their language learning experience. Lakeland Catholic also employs a full time Information, Communication Technology (ICT) Support Teacher who is bilingual and able to assist French Immersion classes with their technology questions, and provide them with the programs they need to improve classroom instruction. Having access to an ICT support teacher who can interact in the classroom in French, adds to the immersion of French in the classroom.

The District also has a French Language Assistant through the Odyssey Program, who comes in and works with the schools planning activities, games, and encouraging students to speak the language. The Odyssey Program's purpose is to promote Canada's official languages, and provide students with a sense of belonging in the francophone community.

Parents of French Immersion Students



Many parents feel they will not be able to help their child at home should they choose to place them in a French Immersion program. At Lakeland Catholic, we ensure parents have all the resources necessary to help their child succeed in their education. The concepts taught in French Immersion are universal, they are not necessarily language based, which means parents will be able to help their child master many of the concepts they may be having difficulty with. $1+1=2$ in any language. Parents help by focusing on these concepts being taught and the underlying skills rather than the language learning, which the child will master in the classroom while immersed with their peers.

There is also a lot of support for parents through Canadian Parents for French (CPF). Both Bonnyville and Cold Lake have a chapter of the organization, and they are there to help parents throughout their child's journey through French Immersion. Parents are

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encouraged to join their local chapters of CPF, and each school has information on the organization. The Military Family Resource Centre is also very involved in helping parents with questions and concerns they may have.

One of our best resources to help parents along the way is the teaching staff at Lakeland Catholic. They are not only there to teach the students but to support the parents throughout their child's journey. They are always available to answer any questions parents may have and provide advice to parents to help their child enhance their learning away from school.

The French Immersion Experience

From Kindergarten to Grade 12, students in the French Immersion program at Lakeland Catholic are provided with countless learning opportunities to better prepare them for graduation and entry into post-secondary education or the workforce. With the growing demand for multilingual employees, the knowledge of a second language will impact a child's career opportunities immensely.

Lakeland Catholic will continue to provide high quality French language instruction to the students of this area. Parents and potential parents wanting more information on our French Immersion program are encouraged to visit our schools. Principals are always willing to give a tour and show off the many learning tools used in the classroom. Lakeland Catholic Schools truly are the ideal schools for any child entering French Immersion.

For more information, please contact:

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