



Niagara Catholic District School Board

FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM

ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

400 – Educational Programs

No 400.6

Adopted Date: December 15, 2025

Latest Reviewed/Revised Date:

In keeping with the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, the Board provides a variety of optional programs for elementary and secondary students. Along with the Core and Extended French programs based on the Ontario curriculum, Niagara Catholic also offers French Immersion in designated schools.

These Administrative Operational Procedures for the French Immersion (FI) program outline the structures, expectations, and processes for the effective administration of the French Immersion (FI) program in the Niagara Catholic District School Board (Niagara Catholic).

The procedures provide clarity for Niagara Catholic schools, families, and system leaders regarding French Immersion program goals, registration procedures, transportation policies, and operational responsibilities.

French Immersion Program Goals

The French Immersion Program at Niagara Catholic District School Board aims to:

- develop students' proficiency in French in alignment with the Ontario Curriculum and the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages),
- promote bilingualism, cultural appreciation, and global citizenship,
- provide equitable access to the French Immersion program through Niagara Catholic and ensure consistent program delivery,
- support student well-being, achievement, and engagement through authentic French-language learning experiences, and
- maintain high program quality through strong staffing, leadership, and professional learning.

Roles and Responsibilities of Principals and Teachers

A. The School Principal of the French Immersion program will:

- implement French Immersion procedures and ensure alignment with Niagara Catholic program guidelines,
- oversee registration and admissions at the school level,
- communicate program information clearly to families and community stakeholders,
- monitor student achievement, well-being, and retention,
- coordinate French Immersion staffing with Human Resources Services,
- provide ongoing support for teachers through professional learning sessions, coaching access, and collaborative planning, and
- ensure daily timetabling meets French Immersion instructional time requirements.

B. Teachers of the French Immersion program will:

- deliver curriculum expectations using effective French-language pedagogy,
- monitor and document student progress in alignment with CEFR, and
- maintain on-going communication with families regarding achievement and supports.

Registration Procedures for French Immersion (Board Wide)

Eligibility

1. The entry point for the French Immersion program is **Grade 1** at designated Niagara Catholic FI schools on a first come-first served basis.
2. Children of families already registered and attending a French Immersion school are eligible for advanced sibling placement for Grade 1 registration. This eligibility will be communicated by the school principal at an advanced date and time to the Open Pre-registration to new families.
3. Children of families already registered and attending French Immersion may register for Kindergarten at the French Immersion School, in the English program. They will be guaranteed a spot in the French Immersion Program when they enter Grade 1. Transportation is provided for eligible students following the Student Transportation Policy (500.2).

Registration Timelines

November–January:

- Promotion of the French Immersion program through school communications, the Board website, social media, and parish networks.
- French Immersion Information Nights will be held at the designated schools.

January–February:

- Online registration will be accessible for all eligible families.
- Required documentation: proof of age, residency, baptism (where applicable), and custody documentation. (In accordance with the Board Admission of Elementary and Secondary Students Policy and AOP (301.1)
- Schools review registration numbers.
- If applications exceed available space, a waitlist is developed
- Families are notified of placement and provided with transition resources.
- Families come into the school to register at the designated school in person.

April–June:

- Acceptance letters and waitlist letters are sent to families.
- Transportation information is shared as it becomes available.

Placement Priorities

- Siblings of current French Immersion students
- Students within the school boundary
- Students from out-of-boundary Niagara Catholic schools if space permits
- Cross-panel or late-entry students considered on a case-by-case basis.

Waitlist Procedures

A waitlist will be maintained by the school until September 30 of the year of entry and families will be contacted in sequence if space becomes available.

Advanced Sibling exceptions: Kindergarten student registration in the English program will be guaranteed a spot in the French Immersion Grade 1 class.

Program Delivery & Instructional Requirements

- Grades 1–8 students receive **50% of instruction in French**. Subjects taught in French are French, Social Studies (grades 1–6), History and Geography (grades 7 and 8), Arts, Health and Physical Education. Subjects taught in English are Mathematics, Science, Religion, English.
- French Immersion schools will ensure access to French resources, technology, and assessments aligned with CEFR.
- Students may participate in DELF A2–B2 assessments in secondary school.

Transportation Policy (Niagara Catholic Guidelines)

Eligibility

- Transportation is provided in accordance with Niagara Student Transportation Services (NSTS) guidelines and the Student Transportation Policy and AOP (500.2).
- French Immersion transportation may be limited to specific catchments, routes, or designated schools.
- Students may be required to travel farther than their home school to attend French Immersion.
- Kindergarten students (Year 1 and 2) of families already enrolled in French Immersion are eligible for transportation in kindergarten, even though they are in the English program with the understanding that they are making the commitment to the French Immersion program when they enter Grade 1.

Parents/Guardians Responsibilities

- Understand that relocation of the French Immersion Program or that out-of-boundary changes may impact eligibility for the program.

Special Considerations

- Exceptional needs are reviewed case-by-case through the Special Education process.

Withdrawal from French Immersion Program

- Should a student withdraw from the French Immersion Program, they must return to their Home School.
- Should a student withdraw from the French Immersion Program and wish to stay at the French Immersion school in the English stream, as an out-of-boundary student, they may only do so if space permits. Transportation would not be provided.

Program Review & Monitoring

Student enrollment and retention will be reviewed and analyzed annually to evaluate the efficacy of the French Immersion program.

There will be a Board-wide review every three years that will consider:

- Achievement and CEFR progress
- Equity of access
- Retention trends
- Staffing stability
- Program quality across sites

Communication Protocols

French Immersion program Information Nights will be recorded or offered in multiple formats.

There will be annual French Immersion program newsletters and board updates.

A parent guide outlining pathways (Grades 1–12) will be shared annually. On-going collaboration with local French cultural and community organizations will take place in partnership with the Board.

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