

KINDERGARTEN IN FRENCH IMMERSION IN CANADA

by Nathalie Rothschild, Ph.D., for ACPI.



Kindergarten French immersion curricula can be classified into three categories



A stand-alone kindergarten curriculum, available in English and in French

A curriculum designed specifically for kindergarten, available in both English and French. Apart from the language in which they are written, the two documents are identical and neither makes reference to the immersion context.



A stand-alone curriculum for French immersion kindergarten

A specific curriculum for kindergarten in immersion, which takes into account the particular context of immersion and the learning outcomes specific to this pathway, and which differs from those designed for kindergarten in English and in French as a first language.



No specific kindergarten curriculum (subject-based curriculum)

No distinct curriculum for kindergarten (it is integrated into each subject area). The curriculum for teaching French as a second language (FSL) in an immersion context is specific and differs from that used for teaching in English and in French as a first language.

Province/ Territory	Student Age	Full-time/Part-time	Percentage of French	Curriculum
Newfoundland and Labrador	5 years old	Full-time	100%	
Prince Edward Island	5 years old	Full-time	90%	
Nova Scotia	5 years old	Full-time	85%-100%	
Quebec	4 or 5 years old	Full-time	50%-100%	
Ontario	4 or 5 years old	Full-time	50%-100%	
Manitoba	4 or 5 years old	Full- or part-time	100%	
Saskatchewan	5 years old	Full- or part-time	90%-100%	
Alberta	4 or 5 years old	Full- or part-time	90%-100%	
British Columbia	5 years old	Full-time	100%	
Yukon	5 years old	Full-time	100%	
Northwest Territories	4 or 5 years old	Full-time	100%	



Priorities for learning French:
vocabulary and oral
communication.



French immersion kindergarten has **become much more diverse** in terms of culture, language, socioeconomic background, and student learning profiles. However, the **resources** to support this diversity are often lacking or available only in English, which compromises the immersive environment.



Priority for overall learning:
socio-emotional development.



Perception of a lack of **resources adapted for immersion** in kindergarten; absence of support and coherence in their use. Rather than creating new resources, it would be more useful to **improve training** and **mobilize existing resources**.



The absence of a **distinct curriculum** forces teachers to define the program rather than support student learning.



Effective communication within schools and school boards fosters teachers' sense of support. Awareness of expectations for their own students, as well as across grade levels, helps to legitimize and strengthen the work undertaken in kindergarten.

Recommendations

1. Identify the vocabulary, expressions, and language structures to introduce as of kindergarten.
2. Encourage the exploration of complex topics, even without full mastery of the vocabulary, in order to create authentic and meaningful opportunities for vocabulary development and language use.
3. Support **self-regulation**, **autonomy**, and the **development of social skills** while enriching vocabulary related to **emotions**, **friendships**, and **routines**.
4. Integrate opportunities for language development through **play** into curricula, ensuring that descriptions of play and French language learning are presented together in a single curricular document.
5. Encourage the **exclusive use of French** by all adults in contact with students in order to strengthen the value of French in the eyes of students and to provide them with important learning opportunities.

In Brief

Resources that are **clear, easy to use, and reflect the reality of French immersion kindergarten classrooms are essential**. When curriculum documents are fragmented and not clearly linked to each other, teachers spend valuable time trying to do this work themselves when they could be planning their lessons and activities.

Canadian Examples

The kindergarten curricula in French immersion in PEI, SK, and NT are illustrations of how understandings from early childhood education, French language learning in an immersion context and other subject areas can be integrated in coherent and practical ways for teachers, while supporting Canada's youngest FSL learners.

This document presents the highlights of the report *Kindergarten in French Immersion in Canada*, published by ACPI in 2025. To read the full version, visit acpi.ca.