

Ocean Cliff Elementary

Intensive French ~ (Grade 6 start)

The Surrey School District is pleased to be the first school district in B.C. to offer an innovative new French program for students called Intensive French (IF). The Intensive French program is based on research and experience in a number of Canadian provinces which have already implemented the program and demonstrated remarkable results for all types of students.

A major goal when learning another language is to be able to communicate freely in that language; to communicate spontaneously and naturally. Intensive French focuses on these goals and achieves them in a shorter period of time than other Core French programs.

What is Intensive French?

Intensive French provides intense instruction in French for the first five months during grade six in order to boost communicative skills quickly. Each day, students in the program receive about 80 per cent of their instruction in French for the first half of the year, while the rest of the curriculum (except for Mathematics) is “compacted” into the remaining half of the year.

The key ingredients for Intensive French success are the intensity of French instruction and the concentrated exposure to the language. By ensuring students and the teacher speak only French 80 per cent of class time during the first half of the year, the focus is more on learning to communicate in French and less on other content learning. Instruction concentrates on the oral, as well as writing and reading skills.

It has also been shown that the most efficient way of learning another language is concentrating the time spent using it. One hour a day for three months is not as effective at learning French as spending four hours a day over three weeks, even though the number of hours is the same.

Why is the Surrey School District offering this program?

Increasing the number of functionally bilingual students – Intensive French offers another avenue for more students to become communicatively fluent in French and, as a result, be able to take advantage of the opportunities that a bilingual Canada offers.

Increasing overall literacy levels – Research has shown that learning a second language increases the overall literacy competency of students. Some research suggests that even weaker students improve their ability to write in English after participating in Intensive French.

Extended learning benefits – Experience in school districts offering Intensive French shows that students demonstrated greater self-esteem, confidence, initiative and responsibility. Further, teachers reported students were more apt to use dictionaries, reference works and the Internet to find information and were more autonomous in their work habits than teachers had experienced with students in a regular curriculum.