Starting at birth, from home to the classroom in French

A guide for parents of children from birth to 6 years of age.
This project was funded by the Governments of Canada and of Ontario in accordance with the Canada-Ontario Agreement on the Implementation of Additional Strategies to Support the Enhancement of French-Language Education.
You make the difference in your child’s life!

Being your child’s primary educator means so much, and the road may be filled with hurdles. In Ontario, selecting French-language education is a winning choice!

In Ontario, French-language Education is provided by 8 French Catholic school boards, 4 French Public school boards and 5 school administrations. There are more than 400 French-language schools throughout the province.

The purpose of this booklet is to encourage parents of preschool children to consider the benefits of providing a family environment where French is present early in their lives. Choosing French-language education and preparing for it, begins long before you enroll your child in kindergarten!

It’s better to act early... Than to be too late!
Even before the birth of your child, you can create an environment which will favor his development!

According to studies, it is important to understand that acquiring language abilities starts **BEFORE** birth. Parents living in a minority Francophone community have all the reasons for exposing their child to the French language right from birth.

“...the early years, particularly for the first three years, set the base for competence... many of these critical periods are over or waning by the time a child is six years old... such as language acquisition...”

*(McCain & Mustard, 1999)*

Obtaining Francophone daycare services or a French-speaking babysitter for your child, to prepare him for French-language schooling, is a true added value!
A majority Anglophone community tips the teeter-totter! Your child risks losing his French heritage and language. To compensate and tip it back, you need to provide your child with a family AND school environment in French from birth until the end of high school. Thanks to your early decision, your child will retain this heritage throughout life.

Don’t be concerned it’s IMPOSSIBLE to have TOO MUCH French in the life of a child living in a minority Francophone environment. Choosing Francophone daycare is a good strong start.

The difference in life
What can you do to incorporate fun activities in your family life?

- Join Francophone playgroups as soon as your child is a few months old;
- Choose Francophone childcare and register your child as soon as possible to ensure you’re on the waiting list before his birth! Enroll your child in a school preparation program (contact the school board in your area);
- Read and sing to your child in French (e.g. in the car), watch French TV programs (e.g. TFO);
- Choose the “French language” option on DVDs;
- Browse children’s Internet sites (e.g. TFO);
• Listen to songs and stories while looking at the text and pictures is a good idea;

• Encourage the non Francophone parent to learn the language along with your child! The efforts made will also support your child’s efforts;

• Talk to your child in French even if your French is not perfect! You are his role model and he might even help you to learn new words;

• Contact Parents partenaires en éducation for other ideas at 1-800-342-0663 or visit www.reseauppe.ca for a wealth of information and tips suggested by other parents.

Training your child’s listening ability to French will help him acquire his language skills!
Where can you find Francophone daycare in your town or village?

The information is at your fingertips! Simply visit the Association francophone à l’éducation des services à l’enfance de l’Ontario’s Website at www.afeseo.ca
Anyone, throughout Ontario, can find Francophone daycare services in his area with a simple click.

To contact the Association directly, call 613-741-5107 or 1-800-391-5595.

Where can you find resources?

For Early childhood

Preschool speech and language programs.

The Ontario Early Years Centres site, for a wealth of information on early childhood services and related services.

www.investirdanslenfance.ca
A site for parents of children aged 0 to 5: games, information and reference tools (in French) for parents.
www.afeseo.ca
The Association francophone à l’éducation des services à l’enfance de l’Ontario, where you will find a repository of early childhood educational resources, a treasure trove to be shared. Also, a directory of child services in French Ontario, articles and feature stories under “L’aventure du parent entraîneur”.

All this and more!

“Bébés en santé, enfants en santé” program at 1-866-821-7770

For information on subject matters such as vision, hearing, speech, language, communication, gross and fine motor skills, cognitive, social and emotional abilities and independence skills.

The following reading guides provide a wealth of tips and information to help you prepare your child for kindergarten:

- The Kindergarten Program, (Ministry of Education, revised in 2006); and
- Early Learning for Every Child Today (Ministry of Children and Youth, 2008)
Bienvenue dans le répertoire virtuel de l’AFÉSEO. Le répertoire permet de localiser des services à travers l’Ontario!

Répertoire virtuel

- Champlain
- Ottawa
- Kingston - Lanark
- Cobourg
- Grand Toronto
- Midland - Barrie - Kitchener
- Owen Sound
- Essex - Chatham - Huron
- Niagara - Brant - Norfolk

Kenora - Rainy River
Thunder Bay
Cochrane
Algoma
Manitoulin - Sudbury
Grand Sudbury
Timiskaming
Parry Sound
Nipissing

Reference provided by AFÉSEO©
Mommy and daddy have a right to know... and to think about my future now!
Other resources

www.reseauppe.ca
Parents partenaires en éducation (PPE) is a provincial organization committed to training, informing and raising the awareness of parents in order to affirm themselves in their role as first educator. Visit our Web site to discover all the tools, projects and resources available to you, to help support you in your parental role. It’s there that you will find the name and email of the parent representative for your school board who will be happy to assist you with any information. You can also contact our provincial office by calling 1-800-342-0663 or 613-741-8846 for all questions.

www.sosdevoirs.org
Homework assistance; (free assistance for parents and students in grades 1 to 12 by Internet chat room or telephone at 1-866-627-0609).

www.edu.gov.on.ca/fre
Ontario Ministry of Education; or telephone 1-800-387-5514.

www.tfo.org
TFO (games, TV schedule, community based activities and education section).

www.cforp.on.ca
Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques, for games, books, and more in French.

http://www.publications.gc.ca/helpAndInfo/bookstores/on-f.html
Locations of Francophone Bookstores in Ontario.

www.apcm.ca
Association des professionnels de la chanson et de la musique (to order French music by Internet).
Do you know if your child has a right to French-language education in Ontario?

In Canadian provinces where Francophones are in a minority environment, Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is very important.

This section guarantees minority language educational rights to the linguistic minority of the province of residence.

Many parents are not aware that they have this right, for their child.

We encourage you to become familiar with Section 23 to understand your rights and to be assured you don’t lose a right you may already have.

To better understand Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, consult the glossary at the end of this booklet or Human Rights Program at the Department of Canadian Heritage at 819-994-3458.

Being well informed about your right to French-language education can make all the difference for your child!
How can I make an informed decision regarding my child’s education?

If you are an “eligible person” under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, your child can attend a French-language school even if he speaks little or no French!

If you value the Francophone culture and consider it important, it is CRUCIAL to understand that…

If you are an “eligible person” and your child DOES NOT ATTEND FRENCH-LANGUAGE SCHOOL, he might lose the right to enroll HIS children in French-language schools FOREVER!

What does your heart tell you?
Why choose a French-language school in Ontario?

French-language education gives children a true “added value”.

- If you are an “eligible person”, whether you speak little or no French, you will give your child the best of both worlds: two cultures and two languages (or more)!

- Your child can benefit from having strong competencies in his French AND English language skills. This means passing on your Francophone heritage AND additive bilingualism!

- Elementary schooling in the French-language is not enough! Within the French minority environment, a child cannot maintain the level of competency acquired in early school years just by completing his elementary schooling in French.

Attending French secondary school and keeping an active Francophone family surrounding are key essentials for your child.
In Ontario, parents can choose between two French-language school boards in the various regions of the province:

- Catholic school boards; and
- Public school boards.

French-language Catholic and Public school boards provide fulltime education programs in junior kindergarten in French. Junior and senior kindergarten programs are especially designed to prepare children to follow the entire Ontario curriculum in French. In some cases, school boards offer junior kindergarten preparation programs.

French school boards in Ontario * can answer your questions on junior kindergarten preparation and French-language education in your region.

If your region does not offer a junior kindergarten preparation program, you can contact the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (Best Start Program) and/or the school board in your region.

The role of a parent as primary educator is crucial to his child’s scholastic success. The parent is a positive and active role model for his child.

* A complete list of Francophone school boards in Ontario and contact information is provided at pages 18 to 21.
Acquisition: Development of learning and knowledge.

Better informed: More enlightened, better educated.

Cognitive: That concerns knowledge, learning ability and the intellect.

Eligible person: Person covered by Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (parents not children are eligible persons).

Primary educator: The first person from whom the child learns in the 4 first years.

Repository: Inventory of information of a particular kind.

Skill: Capacity, ability.
Extract from the Canadian Charter - Section 23

Minority Language Educational Rights

(1) Citizens of Canada:

   a) whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority of the province in which they reside; or

   b) who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of that province have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province.

(2) Citizens of Canada of whom any child has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in English or French in Canada have the right to have all their children receive primary and secondary language instruction in the same language.

(3) The right of citizens of Canada under subsections (1) and (2) to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of a province:

   a) applies wherever in the province the number of children of citizens who have such a right is sufficient to warrant the provision to them out of public funds of minority language instruction; and

   b) includes, where the number of those children so warrants, the right to have them receive that instruction in minority language educational facilities provided out of public funds.
French school boards in Ontario
Catholic Sector

1  Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord  
   705-472-1702  
   www.franco-nord.edu.on.ca

2  Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est  
   613-744-2555 or 1-888-230-5131  
   www.ecolecatholique.ca

3  Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud  
   416-397-6564 or 1-800-274-3764  
   www.csddcs.edu.on.ca

4  Conseil scolaire de district catholique de l’Est ontarien  
   613-675-4691 or 1-800-204-4098  
   www.csdeo.ca

5  Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boréales  
   807-344-2266 or 1-800-367-0874  
   www.csdcab.on.ca

6  Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivières  
   705-267-1421 or 1-800-465-9984  
   www.csdgr.on.ca

7  Conseil scolaire catholique du Nouvel-Ontario  
   705-673-5626 or 1-800-259-5567  
   www.nouvelon.ca

8  Conseil scolaire de district des écoles catholiques du Sud-Ouest  
   519-948-9227 or 1-888-768-2219  
   www.csdecso.on.ca
Ontario

Source: http://esip.edu.gov.on.ca/english/profiles/BoundaryMap_detail.asp?MAP=french-catholic
French school boards in Ontario
Public Sector

1  Conseil des écoles publiques de l’Est de l’Ontario
   613-742-8960 or 1-888-332-3736  www.cepeo.on.ca

2  Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest
   416-614-0844 or 1-888-538-1702  www.csdcso.on.ca

3  Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord de l’Ontario
   705-671-1533 or 1-800-465-5993  www.gno.edu.on.ca

4  Conseil scolaire public du Nord-Est de l’Ontario
   705-472-3443 or 1-888-591-5656  www.csdne.edu.on.ca
French School Board Associations in Ontario

**www.afocsc.org:** Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)  
– A list of all French catholic school boards with contact information.

**www.acepo.org:** Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l’Ontario (ACEPO)  
– A list of all French public school boards with contact information.

**References**


Taylor, G. *Messages-clés Ex-Team*, p. 2-6, 2007


**Collaboration for this booklet**

*Parents partenaires en éducation (PPE)* [www.reseauppe.ca](http://www.reseauppe.ca)

*Je d’école* – Members of the Program Coordination and Advisory Committees, the Association francophone à l’éducation des services à l’enfance de l’Ontario and Family Services of Vanier Community Service Centre.

*L’Association francophone à l’éducation des services à l’enfance de l’Ontario (AFESEO)*  
A directory listing of childcare services near you: [www.afeseo.ca](http://www.afeseo.ca)