

Intensive Basic French Helps Students Succeed

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One month after they started Le français intensif/ Intensive Basic (Core) French, Grade 6 students at Windsor School and Shamrock School in the Louis Riel School Division could speak, read and write at a higher level than their Grade 6 counterparts in the regular Basic French course.

Ms. Carole Bonin and her principal Ms. Sheena Braun, and Ms. Collen Neil and her principal Mr. Charles Tinman organized for these students a three-day min-immersion experience. The students were able to attend a camp in Beausejour in early October and take part in Le français intensif (LF1), also called the Intensive Basic French program.

LF1 was initiated by Dr. Joan Netten and Dr. Claude German in 1998 for Grade 6 students in Newfoundland/Labrador. New Brunswick followed suit with its Grade 5 program. Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Alberta and British Columbia were next to enter their students into the enriched, intensified Basic/Core French program.

Manitoba ventured into LF1 this past September at Windsor School and Shamrock School with 18 and 28 Grade 6 students, respectively.

What is Intensive Basic (core) French?

Intensive Basic (core) French enriches the Basic French program by exposing students to a period of intensive French, enabling them to receive three to four times the number of hours of instruction normally devoted to French in the school year. This enrichment mainly occurs in the last grade of elementary, either Grade 5 or 6.

Certain adjustments need to be made to accommodate the LF1 program. In "A New Look at Core French: Intensive French in Newfoundland and Labrador," Germain and Netten outlined how 60 to 80 percent of the school day is devoted to Intensive French. The total amount of time is thus increased from the normal 90 hours for Grade 6 to over 300 hours. This reorganization of instructional time is achieved by compressing the regular English curriculum and creating a concentrated block of time, generally in the first semester of the school year that is devoted primarily to learning French.

Intensive French enables a wide spectrum of students to benefit from the advantages of a communicative experience in French. It was conceptualized as a language arts experience for students with literacy as its basis.

Across Canada, LF1 is already enjoying incredible success, and it appears it will be no less successful here in Manitoba. In the words of some of the participating students, "J'aime le français!"