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*Meeting the Challenges
of the French Immersion
Intermediate and
Secondary Years*



*VSB Vancouver Board of Education
Modern Languages
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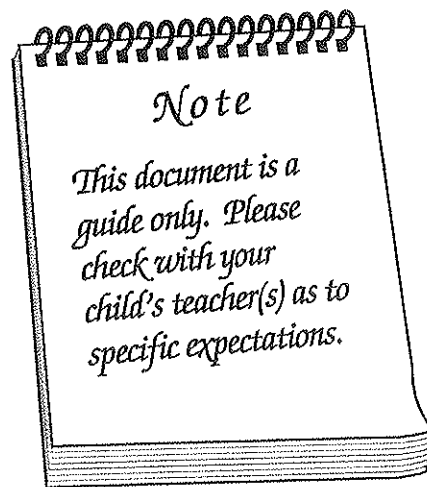
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Introduction

This booklet will provide teachers, students, and parents with tips and guidelines to support Language Arts skills in both French and English. It also discusses topics that reinforce and complement French and English reading and writing skills, such as research projects, self-editing, and organizational skills for homework and timelines.

Students will encounter higher expectations and more sophisticated content as they progress through the French Immersion Program. The dual arts language program, letter grades and greater demands in all subject areas contribute to a more challenging learning environment. For example, formal homework expectations, more sophisticated written and oral presentations may increase demands on your child and, by extension, yourself.

This booklet gives you tips that can be used throughout the intermediate and secondary school years, and well into adulthood. Using these ideas will help maintain parent and child interaction, support curriculum objectives at home, and enhance student self-confidence.




How to Use This Booklet

Teachers

This booklet is intended to be introduced to your class at the beginning of the school year, as part of the Health and Career Education curriculum, so that students understand the expectations of their respective grade level. Read and discuss relevant sections with your class. Encourage them to use the suggestions and tips at home throughout the year, and to share them with their parents. If possible, also introduce and explain this tool to parents, after reviewing it with the students. Possible venues could be at a class or school Open House, or a general PAC meeting.

Students

This booklet was written for you and your parents. Consider it a guide to success for your intermediate and early secondary school years. Take the time to read the sections that apply to you, and keep this tool handy for future reference. Pages written especially for you have been marked with this: 

There are pages with suggestions and tips on various topics such as tackling long-term research projects, maximizing reading, organizing homework and routines, etc. You will find especially useful the pages describing how the general expectations change as you move through your intermediate and secondary years. Whatever you do, don't just let this resource collect dust on some forgotten shelf! It's meant to be used!

Parents

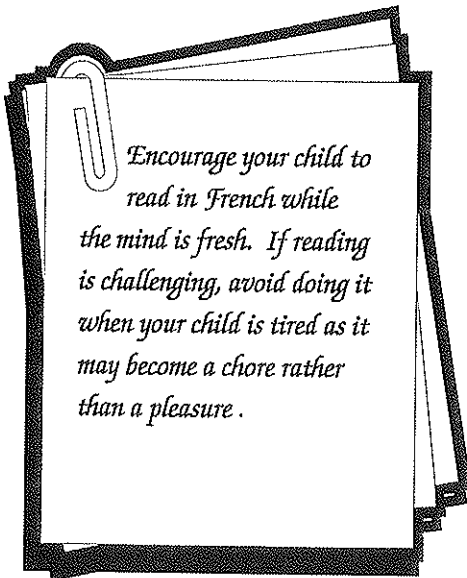
To get the most out of this booklet, take the time to discuss its contents with your child at the beginning of each year, and keep it as a handy reference as various projects and new experiences emerge. Remember that this document is meant to be a general guide only. Specific expectations will be determined by individual classroom teachers depending on the needs of their students.

English and French Reading

With the introduction of the dual language program at the intermediate level, you may find that students are spending more time reading in English than in French. This is understandable because English is all around us and after four years of French Language Arts, reading in English is new and exciting.



Keep in mind that students must continue to acquire more sophisticated vocabulary, grammar and language structures in French, even though reading in English may be their first choice. French instruction time is decreased in the intermediate grades, therefore it is imperative that students keep up their reading in French at home. Given that we are living in an English environment, reading in French will be their primary exposure to the French language outside of the classroom.



Encourage your child to read in French while the mind is fresh. If reading is challenging, avoid doing it when your child is tired as it may become a chore rather than a pleasure.

It is vital that students read at least 20 minutes a day in French at home. What they read and at what level does not matter; as long as it is in French, it counts! It is by reading that one becomes a better reader, even if it seems that there is limited progress in the beginning.

What if I don't like reading?



- Read for fun by selecting topics of interest to you, and by varying the subject and genre. For example...
 - "how-to" books, adventure stories, fantasy, comedy, historical fiction, mysteries, sports, current events, science and technology
 - comics, novels, newspapers, magazines, diaries, short stories, poetry, anthologies

- Reading a short article from newspapers or magazines is as valuable as reading a book for twenty minutes.

- Subscribe to a series or book club: everyone loves to get something in the mail!

- Relax a little...reading should be enjoyable!
 - Having trouble understanding a paragraph or chapter? Don't worry! If you still get the idea of the story, just move on, then go back and review it later at leisure if you like.
 - Use dictionaries when appropriate and with discretion – looking up every unfamiliar word can be discouraging. Rather, use the dictionary for key words, words that are repeated and words that are unclear even from contextual clues. This is true for your first language also.

- Apply reading strategies to aid comprehension
 - look at illustrations, diagrams and other visuals
 - sound out and reread difficult words
 - check the context for clues
 - pay attention to titles, fonts, text size, page layouts

- Use the "five-finger rule" when choosing reading material: If you experience difficulty reading and understanding more than five words on a page, select something else. For secondary students, five unknown words on the same page is acceptable if the text is understood.



What if my child doesn't like reading?

These strategies support reading in the home in any language:

- Use a chart on the fridge as a reading log or any other reward system to which your child responds well.
- Model reading – set the example at home, not just by letting the children see you read, but by letting them see you enjoy reading in a variety of situations.
- Leave French books, magazines and newspapers around the house such as in the den, on the coffee table, on the bedside table, in the bathroom (if you do your reading there!), so that French becomes part of their natural environment and world.
- Let them teach you a few French words.
- Read labels (cereal boxes, etc.), and compare the English and French texts. Also, have a good laugh: some of the “translations” are hilariously inaccurate!
- Have a family reading night. Set a time and place where everyone is reading something. Create an inviting atmosphere: calm, cozy, relaxed, and companionable, by the fire with hot chocolate...
- Take turns reading aloud. This will help your child develop his/her reading fluency and expression.
- Read aloud to your child! Just because they are intermediate students doesn't mean they don't enjoy being read to. This is a good opportunity to introduce the classics and more sophisticated reading material, as well as to demonstrate reading expressively...
- Watch DVDs and French TV (for French subtitles, use caption features on your remote), hockey games, YouTube...
 - Listening to French radio, French rap, audiobooks, Internet surfing, «texting»
- When you go to the public library, make it a routine to pick up books in English and French. There are French sections in the following Vancouver branches: Main, Kitsilano and Renfrew.

To sum up...

DAILY READING

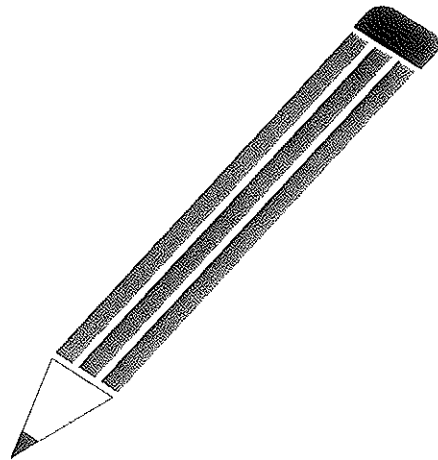
- Set a regular schedule, and stick to it
- Choose a time that will be uninterrupted
- Create a calm, comfortable atmosphere

MOTIVATING THE RELUCTANT READER

- Choose topics of interest
- Subscribe to a book club or a magazine
- Find an interesting book series; already knowing the characters and setting makes reading easier
- Variety is the spice of life ~ try reading different genres
- Don't worry about perfect comprehension, but make sure you get the main idea
- Apply reading strategies to increase comprehension
- Read together, learn together
- Read short articles regularly for a sense of accomplishment

ENCOURAGING READING IN THE HOME

- Leave reading material everywhere
- Limit time watching TV or playing on the computer
- Talk about books at dinner
- Model reading frequently
- Read out loud to each other
- Organize a family reading night



How to Help Your Child With Written Work

In the intermediate grades, much of the written work consists of long-term projects (research, novel studies, etc). When such projects are assigned, see whether your child has the appropriate materials and resources.

Note-taking is a skill taught in class, and can easily be reinforced at home. Make sure your child doesn't copy everything from books or the Internet, but uses key words only. Revising the notes, organizing them, and writing a first draft, using only the key words, are the steps of the writing process learned in class.

It is best to use French resources when doing French research projects. One of the main goals of doing a research project in French is for the students to acquire more vocabulary and use more sophisticated language structures. This goal can only be achieved by using French resources, rather than simply translating from English and drawing upon the French students already know.

The steps of draft → revision → good copy are components of a long-term process. Students improve and perfect these skills over the years throughout their educational journey. The act of revising and fine-tuning is difficult for any child to learn, as at this age, students often feel that the draft, which required so much hard work to produce, is, in fact, the final product. Providing help while your child goes through the editing process is acceptable, as long as you are not doing the work yourself.

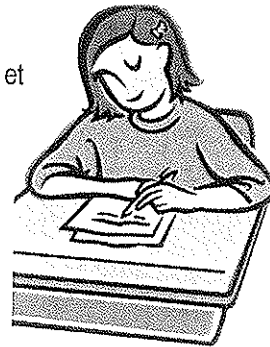
Ways to help

Even if your French is limited, ask your child to tell you the basic ideas in his or her draft. The goal is to see if it makes sense. Are the ideas in logical sequence, flowing nicely together and divided into paragraphs? Are there sufficient details to support the main ideas? Is it interesting, informative, and original?

Once the draft is done, reread the text out loud together, pausing for commas, and stopping for periods. Demonstrate out loud the thought-process behind editing ("Do I need a comma here?"; "Should this be a new paragraph?"; "I need a period here"). Then, have your child imitate your example to show that they can edit their work on their own. Do not worry about correcting everything – it is a learning process. With time, work will become more accurate.

Ways to Help with Writing... *from start to finish!*

- Reinforce the concept that writing ideas down is the first draft, not the final product! Help your child to organize his/her ideas, and leave the grammar details for the next draft.
- Remind your child to apply the grammar rules learned in class: agreements in gender of nouns, plurals, verb tenses, and adjectives. Don't worry if you can't correct the French with him/her. The routine of examining grammar is more important than how many errors you actually pick up.
- Don't look for perfection. What is important is the act of questioning grammar and looking for errors...TO THINK!
- "A good copy" is not only neat and pretty, but also corrected and polished. Encourage your child to APPLY the skills they are learning in class for editing and proofreading.
- Use a checklist as a guide
 - COPS – Capitals, Organization, Punctuation, Spelling
 - MOPO – Majuscules, Organisation, Ponctuation, Orthographe et Grammaire
- Be an audience for your child
 - Have them reread their work aloud, so you know they have reviewed it.
 - Hearing themselves is often enough for them to see where things don't make sense or what may need further editing.
- Simply correcting your child's work is not helpful. Pointing out errors and having your child correct their own work is a better process.



Practicing writing skills – how to make it interesting

- Write in a variety of contexts
 - Letters to family, pen pals, friends
 - Keep a diary, reading log
 - Travel journals are great during the summer. You can send yourself a postcard from every place visited, to be rediscovered on your return! Then, make a scrapbook with journal entries, photos, etc.
- Practice spelling, increase vocabulary
 - Family game night ~ all sorts of activities promote language skills
 - Need a more level playing field? Many common games work very well with a few modifications
 - Play for team or total points to reduce competition and even out abilities
 - Play bilingually so everyone can participate



What about spellchecker and dictionaries?

While a spellchecker is a very useful device, it is not a learning tool, since the machine is looking for errors, not students. Often the suggestions do not work in the given context, and if student's spelling is poor, it may be frustrating not to have any suggestions. However a spellchecker is useful when checking for errors and typos in final copies.

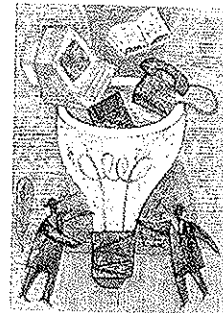
Likewise dictionaries are useful in reading (for meaning) and writing (for spelling), but should not be used excessively as students will simply get discouraged. Sometimes they use the first definition they read, resulting in texts that make little sense.

SOME GAMES TO PLAY

- Scrabble
- Crosswords
- Word searches
- Word Lotto
- Spill 'n' Spell
- Hangman
- Taboo
- Most expensive word (assign a \$ value to each letter of the alphabet)

Critical Thinking

“Critical thinking is essentially an ‘active’ process – one in which you think things through for yourself, raise questions for yourself, find relevant information yourself, etc. rather than learning in a largely passive way from someone else.”



– Alec Fisher, Critical Thinking: An Introduction

Starting in the intermediate grades, more and more emphasis is placed on developing critical thinking and analytical skills. This promotes independent, creative thinking... a.k.a. “thinking outside the box”!

How can you foster such skills at home? Try helping your child develop opinions at a deeper level. Don’t hesitate to discuss films, books, and toys... even if at first you might only get the usual grunts and one syllable responses! Talk about pros and cons, likes and dislikes, etc. Making connections to home, school, books, travel, and current events is a key step to developing analytical skills and learning how to think for oneself.

Of course, the skills developed in thinking critically are not limited to reading and writing, or social studies. They can be applied in mathematics and science, since the underlying principle is to challenge assumptions and prove answers by showing the work or reasoning behind them.

<http://assets.cambridge.org/0521009847/sample/0521009847ws.pdf>

Taking Advantage of The Internet



The challenge of the Internet is to sort through and make sense of the vast amounts of available information. Here are some general guidelines for accessing information in French on the Internet.

One of the best starting points is the Canadian Parents for French (CPF) website. Their listing of online French educational resources is available at www.members.shaw.ca/cpf99/index.html. Included are online French encyclopedias, talking French dictionaries, French accent how-to charts, as well as resources for specific academic subjects from K to Grade 12.

Remember also that Canada is an official bilingual country. You'll find a surprising number of bilingual websites from the full range of government organizations and agencies. For example, if you're doing a research project on space, think of the Canadian Space Agency at www.space.gc.ca. Or if you're doing research on ancient civilizations, try the Canadian Museum of Civilization at www.civilization.ca. Check out www-2.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs.cmu.edu/user/clamen/misc/Canadiana/LISEZ.html for an extensive list of online Canadian resources. For those more familiar with online search engines, you can "Google" in French, too. Just go to www.google.ca, and type what you're looking for *in French*.

When evaluating information for reliability, first think of the source and the date of publication. Government websites are normally a fountain of information. If the source is from a political party, an advocacy group or lobby, a company or marketing board promoting a product, the information provided may be perfectly valid, but you'll have to ask yourself whether it is objective and whether it represents only one point of view. Searches will often turn up websites or posted materials from individuals. It pays to be cautious here: anybody can post their research on planetary science on the web, but you may not have any idea as to its accuracy or validity. Remember that cyberspace is not merely the world's largest library; it is the world's largest bulletin board, where anything can be posted and nothing removed!

Finally, be aware that if you can "Google", so can your teachers! If something looks like it has been "cut and pasted" from the web, your teachers can easily check that out. Remember there's nothing like original thought... and original work!

How to Support Your Child's Homework

At the intermediate level, the amount of work increases with the years. Establishing good habits is imperative when it comes to homework and long-term projects.

Make sure the day planner (or agenda) is taken home and returned to school every day, and that homework is itemized with due dates and completion times. Positively reinforcing this first step will help develop good organizational skills. Think long term! These skills are necessary at the secondary school and university levels, as well as in the workplace. Regular use of the day planner must ultimately become the responsibility of the students, not of the teachers and parents.

Select a consistent and comfortable environment with all the tools and supplies your child may need to complete homework assignments.

Make sure your child comes to school well-rested and well-prepared, with completed homework and all materials needed for the day. Completed homework means your child is ready for instruction and learning!

The Homework Battle: à l'attaque!

Location

The best place to do homework will depend on the needs and personality of each child. Consistency is the key. Whatever room is chosen, the setting, posture, and environment must be conducive to each child's comfort and needs for optimum concentration. For some, silence works best. Some children can work well independently; others may require more direct supervision to get results.

Some parents have seen miracles when homework groups are organized with one or two friends. However keep in mind a few things: make sure they are working (play later!), discourage copying, and ensure that work is neat and complete. There are also formal homework clubs held at school and community centres. Some secondary schools have peer tutoring at lunch time and or after school.

Getting started

Encourage your child to begin with the hard stuff, keeping the easier assignments for "dessert"! Start also with what is due earlier, so that time is well managed.

FIGHT PROCRASTINATION! Homework should be as routine as possible, within the confines of other scheduled activities and meals. Involve children in making a schedule – allowing some choice will make them more accountable for time spent and work accomplished. Build in consequences for not sticking to their routine. Draw a grid of the week or month. Fill in the squares together to get an idea of the child's various commitments.

Homework and television can be a conflict. Consider scheduling favourite shows in conjunction with schoolwork. Teach your child how to take short breaks as personal rewards for completing a task.



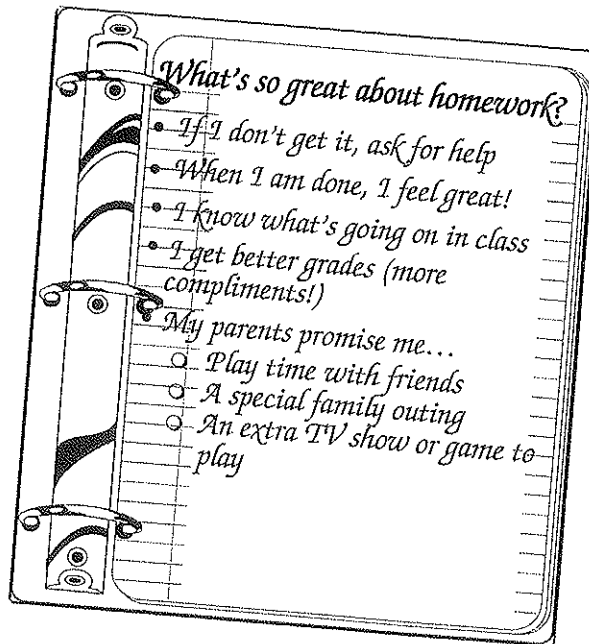
Organizational Checklist



Some students need extra assistance to help themselves become organized and establish a routine. These skills should be developed over time. Consistent monitoring and goal setting to improve organizational skills is crucial to support student success.

SET UP	MAKE SENSE OF YOUR WORK
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular homework schedule	<input type="checkbox"/> Check planner and due dates for assignments
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular study area away from distractions	<input type="checkbox"/> Prioritize projects according to deadlines
<input type="checkbox"/> Required supplies	<input type="checkbox"/> List daily homework, tasks and prioritize.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Cross out tasks once completed

N.B. These guidelines are to set up and organize your work. Once you have mastered them and they become second nature, you will find that you have developed your own routine.



What do I do if my kid ignores me?

First of all, don't panic! Students at this age may not welcome a lot of parental involvement in their schoolwork for a variety of reasons. As they grow older, they are more independent and don't appreciate parents "breathing down their necks"; some are sensitive to the help offered by parents and perceive it as veiled criticism; still others are self-motivated and don't require any additional support. Whatever the reason, you do want to make sure that your children are interested in school and producing good work. Nipping any problems in the bud will avoid greater issues down the road. Here are some guidelines if you find yourself in this situation:

Ask questions about school – getting beyond "nothing" and "stuff"

Ask specifically about the status of projects or presentations and what other kids in the class did. Apart from figuring out what's going on in class, the answers should tell you if your child is happy, settled and interested in his/her class.

Check the day planner and supplies requirement

Be aware of what assignments your child has and when they are due. Gently ask how the work is going. It's important to lay the foundation of good organization early. There is far less tolerance for missed deadlines at secondary school where students have to satisfy the demands of many teachers.

Asking general questions about the subject your child is tackling may lead to a meaningful conversation that will give him/her some indirect help or at least a different perspective. Showing such support makes it easier for your 'proud' child to turn to you for help.

Make sure home reading gets done

The daily dose of reading in French and English for a minimum of 20 minutes each is vital.

Talk to the teacher

Make every effort to attend the teacher night held in September to find out about each teacher's expectations and preferred method of communication. Establish open lines of communication with the classroom teacher(s). Make sure they know about your child's homework habits. They, in turn, can describe how your child performs in class. Any problem areas can be quickly addressed this way.

Transition: Primary to Intermediate Program Features

- A double Language Arts program means developing more independent and cooperative learning skills.
- Expect a more challenging program than in primary grades.
- Letter grades as well as the usual anecdotal comments are given in report cards.
- In the case of a Grade 3/4 combined class, the percentage in each language and the subject distribution will vary each year according to available resources and the needs of the students.
- Basic computational skills should be mastered (addition and subtraction facts, as well as basic multiplication and division).
- Additional programming (band, strings, technology, ...) and specialized teaching require more independence and greater personal organization from the student. They are expected to be punctual, and to keep track of their own textbooks, supplies, instruments, gym clothes, deadlines, etc. for each one of their teachers on the appropriate days.



Transition: Primary to Intermediate

Your new responsibilities grades 4 & 5



- Establishing a solid routine at the beginning of the year is a key factor in your student's success at school.
- Recognize that students have a full Language Arts program both in French and in English.
- It is the student's daily responsibility to write in and consult the day planner to keep track of homework, assignments, due dates, study and reading expectations.
- Some homework may consist of completing work started in class or reinforcing concepts taught.
- Long-term projects are introduced.
- French program: Reading in French 20 minutes daily is essential. Speaking French in class is mandatory.
- Work needs to be reviewed at home. If students do not understand something, please let the teacher know.
- Depending on the teacher, the day planner can be used as a communication tool between parents and teacher.
- If students are absent, they are expected to see the teacher for missed work when they return.
- Students in specialized programs (music, physical education, technology,...) are expected to complete, on their own, work that has been assigned during their absence.
- Monitoring student progress is vital.

Transition: Primary to Intermediate

Your responsibilities grades 6 & 7

NOTE: Expectations set out in the Grades 4 & 5 section are still applicable, in addition to the following.

- Expect a more academically challenging program than in early intermediate grades, and plan to balance extra-curricular activities accordingly.
- At this level, students are expected to be responsible for their own learning.
- Expect more homework compared to Grades 4 and 5.
- Students are held accountable for their assignments, and marks may be deducted for late and/or incomplete work.
- Students are expected to record homework and project due dates daily in their personal day planners.



- Monitor student work.
- Help students be organized with papers, duo-tangs and binders.
- Expect long-term projects: planning grids and timelines are often used to help students organize their workload.
- Encourage students to develop their glossaries of terminology for sciences and social studies.
- Reading is an excellent strategy to build up vocabulary.
- Reviewing vocabulary regularly is vital to retention.
- If absent, students are expected to call a friend to see what was missed and/or see their teachers.

Transition: Elementary to Secondary

- Encourage Grades 6 and 7 students to do their best throughout the entire year as they set the stage for secondary school.
- Consider that Grade 6 third term marks and Grade 7 first term marks have an impact on applications to some secondary programs.
- Encourage extra practice in math if necessary – math at the secondary level can be fast-paced and challenging.
- In early autumn, Grade 7 students should begin to consider options for secondary school.
- Look out for secondary school information early in the school year and begin to narrow down your choices. The Vancouver Board of Education prepares a document for parents that describes Alternative Programs (Mini Schools, etc.), which is also available online www.vsb.bc.ca.
- The Grade 7 teacher in charge of Articulation (the Grade 7 to Grade 8 transition process) will disseminate important information such as dates for Parent Information Nights, application due dates and cross-boundary information.
- Grade 7 students will have an opportunity to visit their neighbourhood secondary school.
- The secondary school Articulation Officer will visit elementary schools to provide students with forms and explain the application process.
- All secondary schools hold Parent Information Nights. Please consult your schools of interest for specific information about Articulation events.
- Churchill Secondary offers an International Baccalaureate in French starting in Grade 10.



COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

If you would like to increase your child's experience of French outside the school, you can take advantage of these resources available in Vancouver:

- *Alliance Française de Vancouver*
6161 Cambie St., 604-327-0201, www.alliance-francaise.ca
Language classes for adults and children. (Library Available)
- *Canadian Parents for French (CPF) - BC & Yukon Branch*
623-409 Granville St., 778-329-9115, www.cpf.bc.ca
A national advocacy organization for French Immersion; newsletter with membership; website contains a wealth of resources and links to French websites.
- *Le Centre culturel francophone de Vancouver*
1551 West 7th Ave., 604-736-9806, www.lecentreculturel.com
Cultural programs; summer day camps for children; Vancouver French community newsletter.
- *French Language Television and Radio*
P.O. Box 4600, Vancouver, 604-662-6000, www.radio-canada.ca, cbc.ca
Channel 7, 59, 70, 73 and radio station 97.7
- *Sophia Bookstore Ltd.*
492 West Hastings, 604-684-0484, www.sophiabooks.com
- *Vancouver Kidsbooks*
3083 West Broadway, 604-738-5335, www.kidsbooks.ca
- *Vancouver Public Library, Kitsilano Branch on MacDonald*
2425 MacDonald St., 604-665-3976
www.vpl.vancouver.bc.ca/branches/details/kitsilano_branch
French children's section: books and cassettes available.
- *Vancouver Public Library, Main Branch*
350 W. Georgia St., 604-331-3603
www.vpl.vancouver.bc.ca/branches/details/central_library
French children's section: CDs, DVD's, videos and cassettes available.
- *Vancouver Public Library, Renfrew Branch*
2969 East 22nd Ave., 604-257-8705
www.vpl.vancouver.bc.ca/branches/details/renfrew_branch
French children's section: books and cassettes available.

