



Bilingual Education and Programming in Manitoba Questions & Answers

Q What is the current policy and status of instruction in languages other than English or French?

A The legislation allowing for bilingual education in Manitoba occurred in 1979, similar to developments in Saskatchewan and Alberta. The Public Schools Act of Manitoba addresses this topic in Section 79, Languages of Instruction. This section includes the following excerpts:

English and French as languages of instruction

79(1) Subject as otherwise provided in this section, English and French are the languages of instruction in public schools.

Use of other languages

79(2) When authorized by the school board, a language other than English or French may be used in any school in the school division or school district

- (a) for instruction in religion during a period authorized for such instruction;*
- (b) during a period authorized by the minister for teaching the language;*
- (c) before and after the regular school hours prescribed in the regulations and applicable to that school;*
- (d) in compliance with the regulations as a language of instruction, for transitional purposes;*
- (e) in compliance with the regulations, as a language of instruction for not more than 50% of the regular school hours as determined by the minister.*

Therefore, section 79 (2) sets out the basic conditions under which instruction in languages other than English or French may be offered in Manitoba's schools. It is important to note that:

1. instruction in a language other than English or French is not a right, and is subject to the discretion of the school division or school, **as it must be authorized by the school board**
2. Secondly, instruction in languages other than English or French may be used **for not more than 50% of the regular school hours**

Q What is the difference between bilingual programming and French Immersion and Français Programs?

A **Bilingual Programming:** As explained above, instruction in languages other than English or French may not be used for more than 50% of the regular school day. Therefore the term Bilingual programming is used to describe such programs as an Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit) or international language would be used for 50% of the school day and English or French would be languages of instruction for the other 50%. Commonly, from grades 7 to 12 instruction in the target Indigenous or International language is reduced to two subjects Language Arts and Social Studies.

French Immersion: The goal of French Immersion is to provide an opportunity for non-francophone students to become bilingual in English and French. In these programs in Kindergarten, French is the sole language of instruction and then from grades 1-6, instruction is entirely in French, with the exception of English Language



Arts. As the majority of the school day is devoted to French Language instruction, the term immersion is used to describe the program.

However, from Grade 7 through Grade 12, schools have two options and will still be considered French Immersion programs:

- Option 1: all subjects are taught in French except for English LA-Immersion **or**
- Option 2: in Grades 7 and 8, *some courses are taught in French for a minimum of 50% of the total teaching time.* From Grades 9 to 12, *a minimum of 14 credits from courses taught in French are necessary to answer to the requirements.*

(For further information on French immersion in Manitoba and related support documents see http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/fr_imm_pr.html)

Français Program: Is a program intended for French first language learners and are distinct from French Immersion programs, although both intend to develop bilingual learners. These programs are intended for Francophone children or, as stated in Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, for a child:

- of a parent whose first language learned and still understood is French; or
- of a parent who received primary school instruction in French anywhere in Canada; or
- whose sibling has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in French anywhere in Canada.

French first language education is offered from Kindergarten to Grade 12. However, English Language Arts is introduced in Grade 3 or Grade 4. School programming and extra-curricular activities provide a solid and dynamic environment that values French language and Francophone cultures. Schools and the school division usually communicate with parents in French. Schools offer assistance to parents who do not speak French, enabling them to be involved in their child’s education.

(For further information on all French Language programming see [A Guide to French Language Education in Manitoba.](#))

Q What is being done to promote and retain Indigenous Languages in Manitoba?

- A** The Aboriginal Languages Recognition Act (2010) recognizes Indigenous languages but it has not resulted in changes to the public School Act in terms of instruction or to funding of Indigenous languages. The Act states that the seven languages of Cree, Ojibway, Ojibway-Cree, Michif, Dene, Dakota and Inuktitut are recognized as the Indigenous languages spoken and used in Manitoba. There is an understanding that Indigenous language programming including immersion programming “may be used” as languages of instruction. Funding of Indigenous languages is available through the Indigenous and International Languages categorical grant and other grants which can be found in the [Funding of Schools](#) document.

There are ongoing discussions, projects, strategies being implemented to promote, retain and revitalize Indigenous languages.



Q What are the current bilingual programming options?

A Currently, in Manitoba’s public schools bilingual programming is offered for Cree, German, Hebrew, and Ukrainian. Ukrainian bilingual programming is offered in Saskatchewan and Alberta as well. Alberta has a more extensive list of bilingual programming than Manitoba. Spanish, Mandarin, and Arabic bilingual programs are offered in that province in addition to German, Hebrew, and Ukrainian.

Q Who determines what kind of curriculum is taught?

A Generally, Manitoba Education is responsible for developing or approving curriculum. In some cases, the development of curriculum is done in partnership with school divisions and other provinces.

Q Is there existing curriculum available?

A There is existing curriculum available for the four languages for which Manitoba schools offer bilingual programming. In the case of new bilingual programming in other languages which may be offered in Manitoba, but for Manitoba does not have existing curriculum, the department usually seeks permission and/or purchase rights to adapt curricula developed in other provinces or jurisdictions.

Manitoba Education collaborated with Alberta and Saskatchewan in developing a common Curriculum Framework for Bilingual Programming in International Languages (1999) and for Indigenous Languages and Culture (2000), under the auspices of the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) for Collaboration in Basic Education. These common curriculum frameworks have been the basis for the development of all bilingual curricula in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

For example, Alberta Education has developed bilingual education curriculum for several languages for use in their school, including Mandarin and Spanish bilingual programming. In addition, some School districts in Alberta have developed curriculum for other languages based on the same common curriculum frameworks. For example, Edmonton Public Schools have developed curriculum for Arabic bilingual programming.

Q What role does the Department of Education have?

A Manitoba Education is responsible for curriculum development and/or approval, partners in curriculum implementation and teacher training, and provides limited additional support through the Indigenous and International Languages Categorical Grant to schools.

(See [Funding of Schools](#) for further information on Indigenous and International Languages support Grant and other categorical grants.)

Q Who decides if and what new bilingual education programming opportunities are offered in Manitoba schools?

A As stated earlier, instruction in a language other than English or French is not a right, and is subject to the discretion of the school division or school, **as it must be authorized by the school board**. Therefore the introduction of new bilingual programming will be the result of a school division initiative or more often of as result of parents and community member s petitioning the school division or school to offer such programming. Briefly the process is as flows.

- ✓ The parents or community group request/petition the school division to offer a bilingual programming in a specific language.



- ✓ The school board considers the request and decides whether to support the parents'/group's request/petition.
- ✓ Once a school division has decided to support the launching of a new bilingual programming opportunity, students and parents in the division are surveyed as to their interest in participating in such programming.
- ✓ If the response is positive and sufficient students are identified, then the school division will identify a school to house the programming and parents will be requested to register students for the program.
- ✓ If sufficient students are registered the program is launched.
- ✓ A curriculum development team is formed to begin developing pilot curriculum and identify learning resources.

Q When will programming start?

A The start date is dependent on the school boards' decision making processes and requirements that they may set to begin bilingual programming.

Q Are bilingual programs only for children of a specific language or cultural background?

A Generally, the program will be open to all students regardless of cultural or linguistic background. Children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds may benefit from the programming.

Q How is the location of the school determined?

A School boards ultimately determine if a bilingual program is to be in the school division and in which schools. The placement of a new program in a specific school depends on many factors, including the availability of space, long-term plans for specific schools, compatibility with other programs offered in a particular school, and other factors.

Q Do parents have any input into location?

A School boards will consult parents and will take parents' preferences into account. However, the School Board is ultimately responsible for implementation of the program and the management of facilities and staff.

Q What grades will the program include?

A Usually bilingual programming will be launched with students entering Kindergarten and/or Grade 1, with additional grades being added as students are promoted from one year to the next. Bilingual programs may be offered to Grade 12 (as with the current German Bilingual Programming), but in some cases, it may be offered to Grade 8 only (as with the Ukrainian bilingual programming). However, **French Immersion** Program in Manitoba has two other possible entry points: **Middle Immersion** – Grade 4 entry and **Late Immersion** – Grade 7 entry.

Q Can out of division students attend?

A Students from other school divisions may attend programs in out of division schools through Manitoba's **Schools of Choice** initiative, which allows students to apply for admission to any public school in the province. For more information visit [Schools of Choice](#).



Q How much of the day is in the target language instruction?

A Manitoba's Public School Act allows a language other than English or French to be used as a language of instruction for up to 50% of the school day. Schools often opt to divide the school day into two half-day language specific segments so that students have an extended period of language instruction.

Q Is there a possibility for a French/FNMI Bilingual Programming?

A The Public School Act of Manitoba does not specify whether the use of other languages for instruction in bilingual programming has to be offered in combination with English as a language of instruction. However, until now, Bilingual programming has been offered as a modified form of English program school model.

Q Are there qualified teachers to teach in bilingual programming?

A Manitoba is a province with great diversity and there are many teachers of backgrounds who are certified to teach in Manitoba, from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Many of these teachers may be first language speakers of the language or highly proficient additional language speakers. Some will have experience in teaching in schools and countries where the language is an official language of instruction. However, some may not have the required language proficiency and/or training and experience for early years bilingual programming.

It is up to the school division to hire and provide the teachers with professional development opportunities. However, the Department will often collaborate with teacher groups and school divisions to plan and offer professional development opportunities.

Q Is there transportation available for students?

A This will depend on the location of the student's home and the distance from the school, the divisional policies, and whether the student's home falls within the school division's catchment area.

Q Will my child need to have language skills before entering the program if they start in a later grade?

A In Early French Immersion and in the German, Hebrew, and Ukrainian bilingual programs, the only "entry point" to the program is in Kindergarten or Grade One. Occasionally, in special circumstances, students are permitted to join a program at a higher grade level, but these students need to show that they have sufficient language skill to be successful in the program and to permit the program to function at an advanced level of language proficiency.