

# THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM IN MANITOBA

**A Renewed Vision - 2017**

Kindergarten to Grade 12

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Available in alternate formats upon request.

## OVERVIEW

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The Bureau de l'éducation française has created a renewed vision for the French Immersion Program in Manitoba in response to its evolving needs and current research. Building on the rich heritage of the Program, the present document will guide the future direction of French Immersion in the province.

The vision lays the current foundation for a renewed program where students benefit from a rich French Immersion experience and where they develop their French language proficiency, achieve academic success, and cultivate their plurilingual identity.

The vision is intended to support educators as they lead students on the path to becoming proud, confident, engaged, plurilingual global citizens. It is important that both parents and students also be aware of the renewed vision so they understand their shared responsibility in its realization.

The vision will orient our thinking and decision-making, inform instruction and assessment, and guide conversations with parents and students, ensuring the full implementation of the French Immersion Program in our communities. With student success in mind, one must continuously reflect on the following:

How do we sufficiently engage students in learning and using French so that they acquire the necessary language competency to communicate effectively, become confident in their linguistic abilities, and see the relevance of French in their lives as they live as plurilingual members of society?

To this end, the document presents:

- the vision of the French Immersion Program in Manitoba
- a diagram of students' pathway in French Immersion, illustrating how this renewed vision is experienced and lived by students
- pedagogical practices that support the realization of the vision

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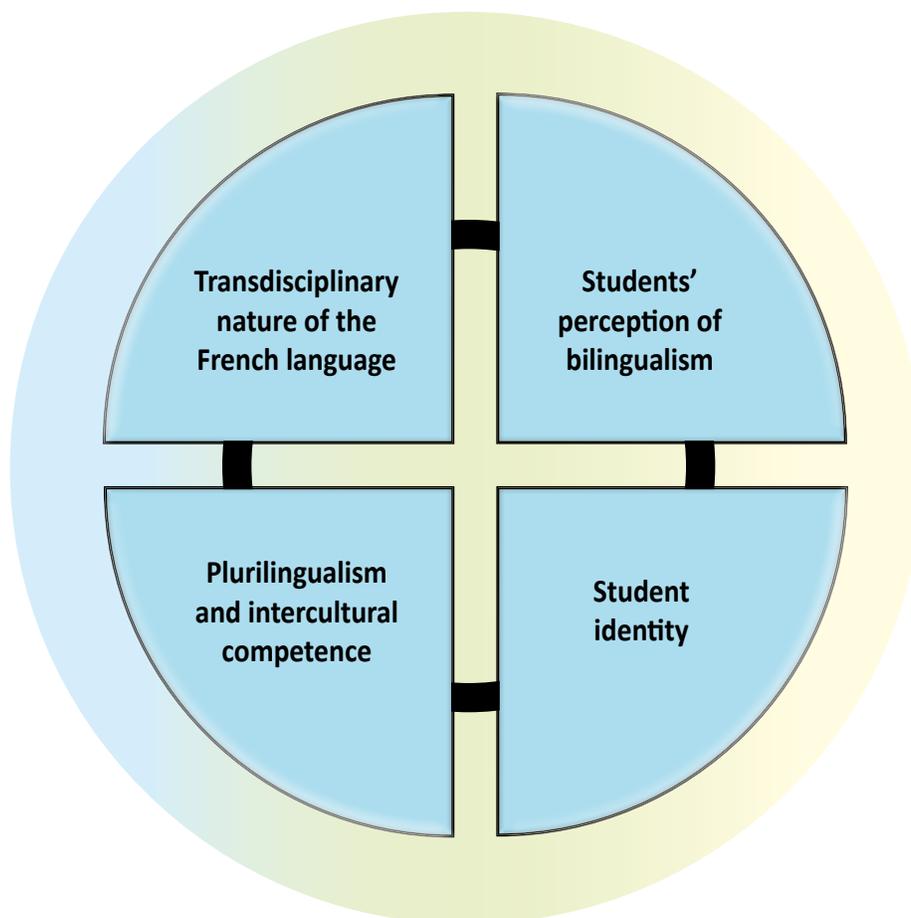
## INTRODUCTION

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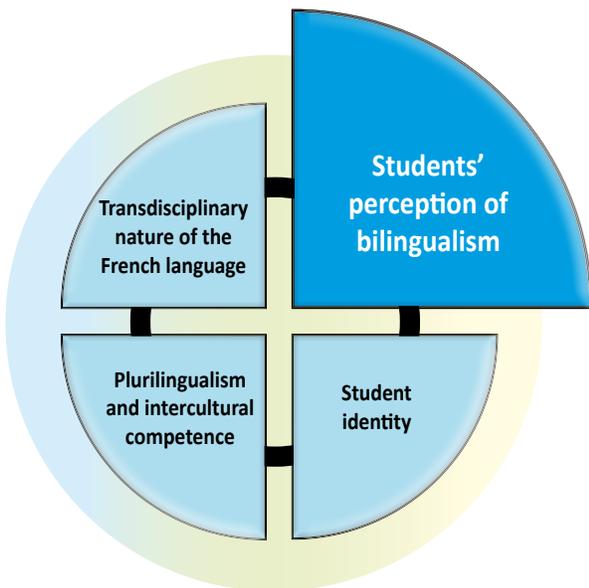
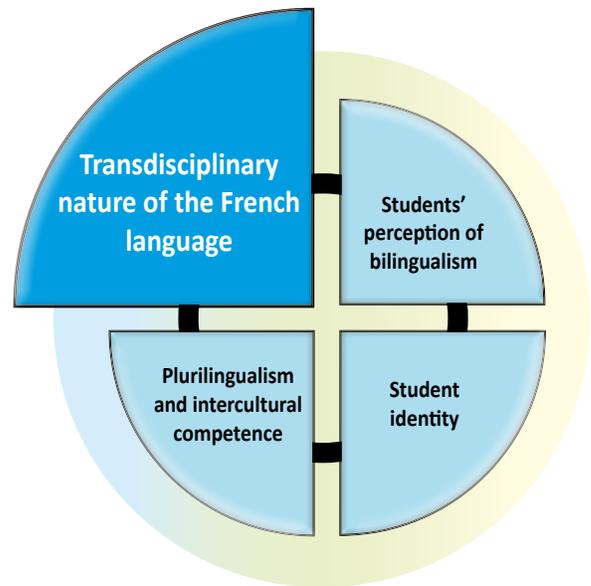
Since 1973, the French Immersion Program in Manitoba has had a successful history. Building on its rich and solid heritage, the Program is turning to the future. It continues to evolve in response to current realities, observations in the field and reflection informed by recent research in French language education.

Current realities, such as the role of the transdisciplinary nature of the French language, students' perception of their bilingualism, concept of plurilingualism and the importance of intercultural skills as well as the concept of the students' identity as learners in immersion, call for a renewal of the French Immersion Program in Manitoba.

### Current realities



The French Immersion Program is first and foremost a program of language and communication. The French language is both the object of and the vehicle for learning in all academic disciplines. Because of this transdisciplinary nature, all teachers working in the program at all levels and in all disciplines share the responsibility for ensuring quality teaching not only with respect to the content of the discipline, but also with respect to the French language itself. It is important to recognize that a greater emphasis on developing French language supports a deeper comprehension of content (Lyster, 2016). The time invested in integrating language learning with subject matter content contributes to the development of language accuracy and confidence in students, resulting in a more holistic approach.

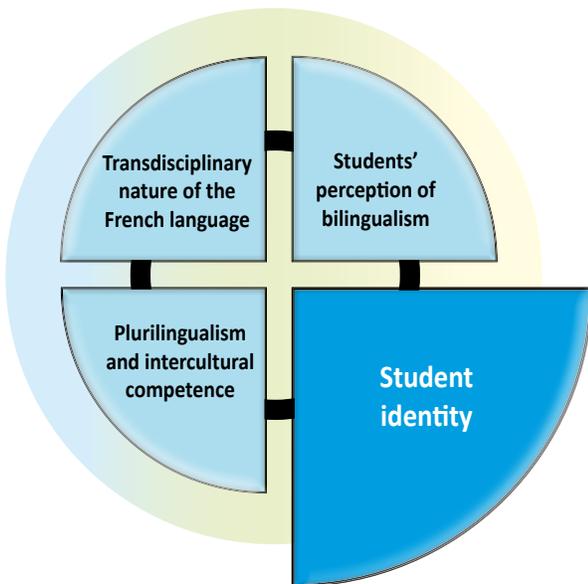
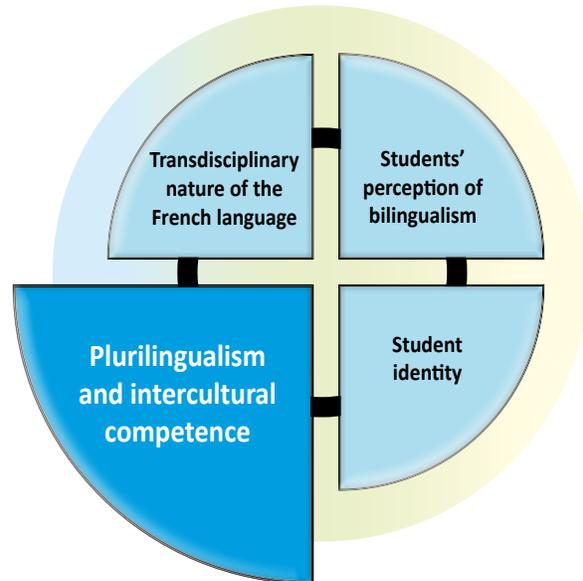


Initially, the goal of the French Immersion Program was to enable students to become “functionally bilingual”. Today, the goal of the program is to promote a bilingualism that goes beyond the purely “functional” use of French and English. The program now seeks to develop global citizens, capable in French and in English, “to participate and contribute to society in ways that build identity, social responsibility, citizenship, [and] independence” (PONC, 2011, p. 15). Students’ perception of their own bilingualism impacts the development of their identity as bilingual citizens who speak both of Canada’s official languages, as well as their level of confidence and commitment to learning French.

In order for learners to perceive themselves as bilingual, students must come to understand that being proficient in French does not necessarily mean mastering the language to the same degree as a native speaker (Lyster). For most immersion students, this level of proficiency represents an unattainable goal. Mastering a language occurs gradually, continuing throughout the students’ schooling and throughout their entire life. It is important to recognize and understand that the path of language acquisition is an ongoing process. Such an awareness allows learners to develop a positive and realistic attitude toward their learning and, in turn, develop confidence and French-language skills.

## INTRODUCTION (CONTINUED)

An added benefit of bilingualism is its potential to promote students' understanding of plurilingualism as well as an openness to other languages and cultures. Plurilingualism allows a language to be learned in relation to another, where one language draws on the other. This new plurilingual reality is increasingly present in the immersion classroom and the dynamics of this diversity of languages and cultures, far from posing obstacles, add considerable resources to enrich the students' learning.



The concept of students' identity as learners in French immersion has been gaining ground for some years. "Blais (2003) points out that graduates of immersion schools are neither [solely] francophone nor [solely] anglophone, but have another identity" (Mandin, 2007, p. 6). John Ralston Saul adds that immersion students are part of a new Canadian collective, a growing minority. It is therefore important to promote this "other identity" and to guide and support learners in developing an awareness of the impact of the French language on their learning and on the person they are, and in this way help them value their constantly evolving identity. Students will then be able to take their legitimate place in the Canadian bilingual community.

## THE VISION OF THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM IN MANITOBA

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In an effort to adapt to these current realities, Manitoba has created a renewed vision of the French Immersion Program to support educators, students and parents.

### THE VISION OF THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM IN MANITOBA



**The goal of the French Immersion Program is to develop proud, confident, engaged, plurilingual global citizens.**

The French Immersion Program enables students to interact spontaneously, autonomously, and confidently in French with pride and ease. They seek opportunities to engage in the Francophone community. Their identity as Canadian citizens, competent in both French and English, creates lifelong opportunities and fosters openness to other languages and cultures.



## THE VISION OF THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM IN MANITOBA (CONTINUED)

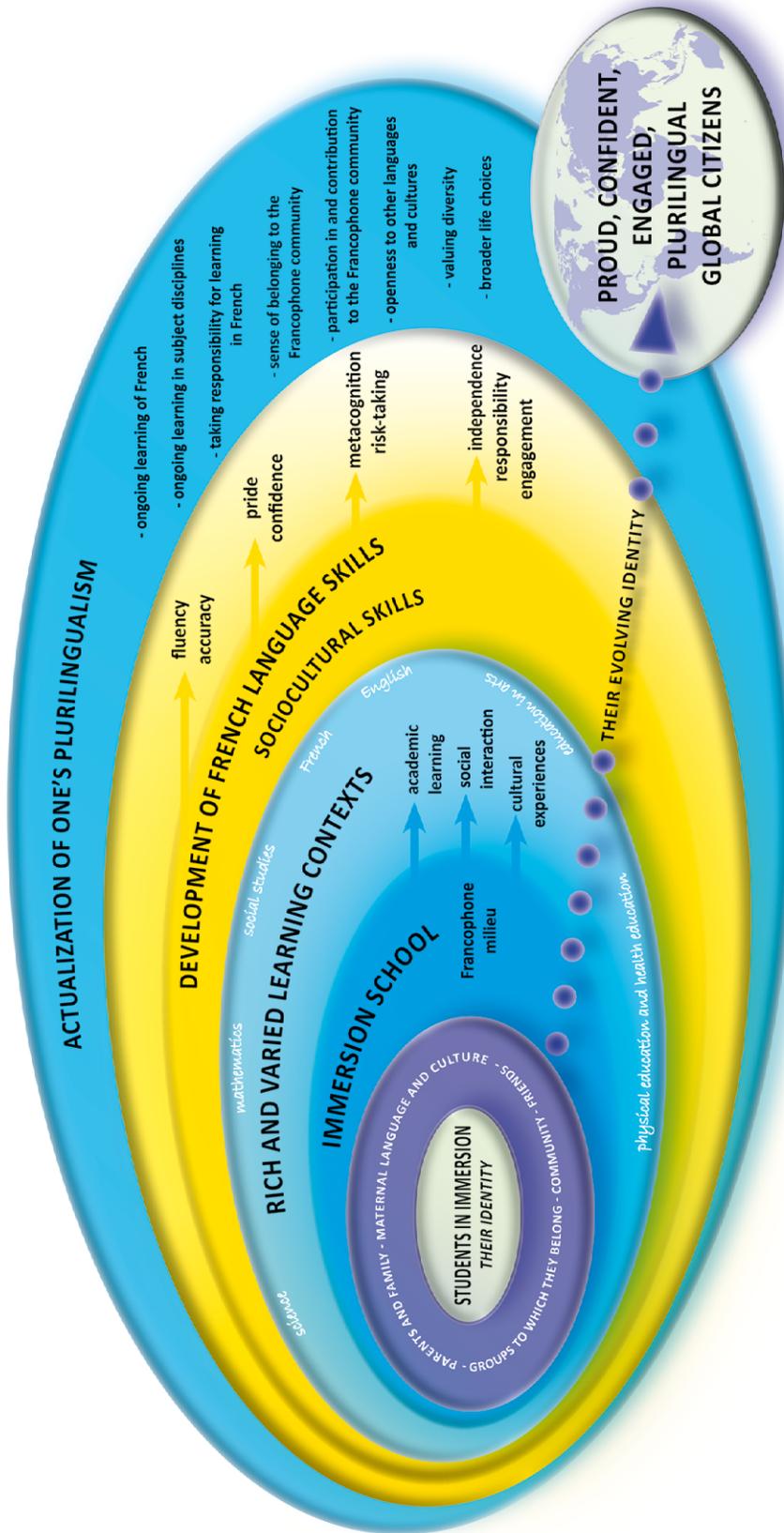
The following table provides context for the key words used to explain the vision for the French Immersion Program.

| LEARNERS:       |   |
|-----------------|---|
| GLOBAL CITIZENS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop cultural and intercultural skills</li> <li>• are open to the Francophonie and cultural diversity</li> <li>• are aware of different ways people around the world act, think and express themselves and know how to act based on this diversity</li> <li>• are able to make broader life choices</li> <li>• develop a greater sense of citizenship</li> <li>• think critically and demonstrate ethical awareness</li> </ul>  |
| PLURILINGUAL    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are able to speak more than one language</li> <li>• understand that their proficiency in the languages they are learning is constantly evolving</li> <li>• understand that the languages learned are interdependent and not learned in isolation</li> <li>• study and identify links between languages and benefit from them</li> <li>• discover that their knowledge and experiences related to the languages they know, influence each other and contribute to the development of a language repertoire</li> <li>• use socio-linguistic knowledge</li> </ul> |
| CONFIDENT       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are confident in their linguistic and sociolinguistic skills</li> <li>• develop confidence by working on fluency and accuracy in their communication in French</li> <li>• adopt a positive view of their French and English skills</li> <li>• have the ability to identify their strengths and limits in order to improve their skills</li> <li>• develop greater independence and self-esteem</li> </ul>  |
| PROUD           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate a sense of belonging to the immersion community</li> <li>• are aware of and appreciate their progress as learners in immersion</li> <li>• develop a sense of success</li> <li>• are aware of the challenges they have overcome and value their success in overcoming them</li> <li>• share their achievements and successes</li> <li>• seek to validate their experiences with others</li> </ul>   |
| ENGAGED         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• take charge of their learning of French</li> <li>• take responsibility for learning French both during and after school hours</li> <li>• participate in and contribute to the Francophone milieu and community</li> <li>• choose to express themselves in French when the opportunity arises in daily activities</li> <li>• choose various ways to use French in their daily activities</li> </ul>   |

# STUDENTS' PATHWAY IN FRENCH IMMERSION

## Students' Pathway in French Immersion

The following diagram illustrates how the renewed vision of the French Immersion Program in Manitoba is experienced and lived by students throughout their journey.



The French Immersion Program needs to place “language where it naturally belongs – in the lives of individuals. Far from being reduced to an object of study, language – all languages – reclaim their key role of enabling students to act in society, interact with others, and advance along a personal path, constructing a richer and more open identity” (Piccardo, 2014).

## STUDENTS' PATHWAY IN FRENCH IMMERSION (CONTINUED)

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### EVOLVING STUDENT IDENTITY

All students enter school in the French Immersion Program with their own unique identity. This multidimensional identity develops through family, friends, community, the groups they belong to, languages spoken at home, culture, beliefs, values and experience. The students' identity is moulded by the past, present and future. As a result, their identity as learners in French immersion is constantly evolving.

Their identity is constructed and redefined continuously based on their interactions with their environment and the people around them. Throughout their schooling in the French Immersion Program, students are called upon to reflect on the essential questions – *Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? What do I want to become? Who have I become?* – in order to know themselves better.

### RICH AND VARIED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IN IMMERSION SCHOOLS

French immersion schools are the first and often the only Francophone environment in which students interact. It is important to create a Francophone environment with a vitality that is maintained by the entire school community. Each stakeholder plays a key role in the development of this environment. Students, placed at the centre of learning within this Francophone environment, co-construct their identity and experience its evolution through rich and varied social, cultural and academic interactions in each of the academic curricular areas. These interactions promote significant, relevant and engaging use of language.

### DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE SKILLS

Students who are valued and stimulated in a climate of emotional security gradually develop their language and sociocultural skills by exploring French language through risk-taking and the specific instruction they receive. Ongoing interaction with the target language develops fluency and accuracy and thus supports communication and comprehension. Students are called upon to reflect on their learning in order to improve their language skills. They consciously engage and take responsibility for their language learning and progressively increase their independence, pride, confidence and pleasure in learning the language.

### ACTUALIZATION OF STUDENT PLURILINGUALISM

The students' ongoing progression allows them to experience their plurilingualism at their particular level of development. They develop at their own pace based on their preferences and choices and integrate French as a natural part of themselves. Using their linguistic plurality, students laugh, have fun, dream, are moved, play, reflect, take action, make themselves heard, and get involved in French. This engagement leads them to participate in the Francophone milieu, to develop a sense of belonging to the Francophone community and encourages them to open up to other languages and cultures. Students make learning French a lifelong endeavour that contributes to transforming their thinking and how they interact with the world. Transformed by their experience in immersion, students experience their Francophonie to the fullest. Open to the diversity they see in themselves, they value this quality in others and become proud and engaged plurilingual global citizens.

## PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT THE VISION OF THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM

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In order to ensure that students experience the vision of the French Immersion Program in Manitoba and have their immersion experience validated both inside and outside the school environment, educators should consider the following pedagogical practices:

1. Place students in various contexts and significant, relevant learning situations in which they can practice, develop and improve their French-language skills through interaction.
2. Develop the students' competence and confidence in oral communication by regularly creating spontaneous communication situations in academic, social and cultural contexts.
3. Inspire students to engage as lifelong learners of French and to open up to and participate in the Francophone milieu.
4. Encourage students to use French or choose opportunities for French experiences in their personal and academic lives.
5. Provide students with the tools they need to encourage them to take responsibility for their learning and proficiency in French.
6. Accompany students in various activities in the Francophone community.
7. Expose students to various models of written and spoken French, accents and language registers.
8. Give students multiple opportunities to reflect in French on their language learning in order to self evaluate and to improve their skills.
9. Give students opportunities to build on the interrelation between the two languages they are learning or other languages they speak.
10. Encourage students to reflect on their experience in French immersion, share their progress and talk about their identity as learners in immersion and as members of the Francophone community.
11. Provide ongoing constructive feedback that enables students to develop their language repertoire, better understand academic content, and express themselves correctly.
12. Introduce students to the various aspects of the Francophone world they can integrate into their lives.
13. Create a climate of risk-taking in which making mistakes is viewed positively as a learning tool.
14. Invite parents to play as active a role as possible in validating their child's immersion experience from Kindergarten to Grade 12.
15. Give students opportunities to interact with other French-speakers (e.g.: other students, seniors, members of the Francophone community, members of virtual spaces, etc.).

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