If my child is struggling in reading, should he or she remain in the French Immersion Program?

Yes. With appropriate supports, your child can be successful in reading in English and in French. If your child is struggling in reading in English, transferring your child to the English Program will not make his or her academic difficulties disappear. Learning to read in French will provide him or her with more exposure to texts, reading, and comprehension strategies. Research findings pertaining to the English skills of French Immersion students indicate that after an initial lag lasting until a year or two after English language arts is introduced, early French Immersion students perform as well in English or better than their English counterparts (adapted from French Immersion in Manitoba: A Handbook for School Leaders, p. 2–7).

What makes home reading look like?

If my child is struggling in reading, what can I do to help get my child ready for reading in either English or French?

• Talk to your child—listening and speaking are a child’s first introduction to language.
• Establish a reading time, and read every day.
• Read aloud to your child regularly.
• Set an example and let your child see you read.
• Talk about books—discussing a story or a book with your child helps him or her understand it and connect it to his or her own experiences of life.
• Show an interest in the books that your child brings home.
• Listen to your child read and give specific praise about what your child is doing well.
• Make reading fun.

For more ideas, visit the department’s website at: http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/parents/learn/read.pdf

IF MY CHILD IS EXPERIENCING CHALLENGES IN LEARNING TO READ, WHAT SHOULD I, AS A PARENT, SEE?

Reading is a developmental process and readers progress at different rates. When your child begins to read in English in Grade 1, teachers will closely monitor progress and offer targeted supports as necessary. These supports may include explicit teaching to help students:

• choose books according to personal interests.
• listen as parents read to them.
• share and explore books with family members.
• reinforce reading behaviors such as looking for details/ clues in illustrations.

Prior to arriving in school, a child’s language growth is entirely dependent on what people say to the child, how often they talk with the child, and what they talk about. Entry to school places big demands on a child’s existing language skills as new experiences and conversations move into new relationships and learning experiences. Language development in one’s first language is essential to learning, and plays a crucial role in the later development of successful readers. Children learn about books, language, and themselves when others read to them and when they play. These types of experiences set the stage for reading acquisition.

In the French Immersion Program, French oral communication is the foundation and at the centre of all learning that occurs. To read and to be able to understand what is being read, students need to acquire a solid language base that includes vocabulary and language structures. As students begin the French Immersion Program, they generally come with a relatively solid base in English; however, they have little or no language experiences in French. This reality has a significant impact on the way reading is approached and taught in the French Immersion Program. Expectations for beginner readers in French and English reflect the particular needs and demands of learning a second language.

Reading skills developed in English in Grade 1 transfer to reading in French. However, the development of your child’s reading skills in English is a strong predictor of how your child will succeed in reading in French. Teachers can therefore anticipate what your child will need to be successful in reading in French. Grade 1 teachers will be attentive to your child’s possible challenges with reading in French. They will focus their instruction on developing French oral vocabulary and language structure. They may do this by targeting sound and word knowledge through nursery rhymes, poems, and songs as well as explicitly teaching the language.

What can I do to help get my child ready for reading in either English or French?

Type of home reading

What are the possible goals or purposes of home reading for the student?

French or English books, chosen by students (can be beyond their reading ability)

• Choose books according to personal interests.
• Listen as parents read to them.
• Share and explore books with family members.
• Reinforce reading behaviors such as looking for details/clues in illustrations.

French books, chosen by teacher

• Count the number of sentences on a page. Identify the capital letters and periods in sentences, count the number of words in a sentence, etc.
• Read the illustrations and talk about the story page by page.
• Read the story using their own words or words they recognize in the text.
• Share their favorite books that have previously been read by the teacher.
• Read stories that have been written collectively by the students and that have been previously practiced during choral reading.

English books, chosen by teacher

• Talk about the stories, illustrations, etc.
• Practice reading familiar books.
• Develop fluency and confidence.

The aim of this document is to share information with parents and guardians regarding reading in the French Immersion Program. It will give you the knowledge and tools to better prepare your child for the French Immersion Program and encourage success in both French reading and English reading.

For more information, please contact your child’s teacher.
From birth, children learn to "read" their world as well as the non-verbal and verbal communication of others. This occurs naturally. However, reading print is not a natural process. It is a complex process involving discriminating sounds from speech and connecting letters to form meaning. It differs from one language to the other. Words convey ideas and reading consists of making sense of these ideas. Reading is not only about decoding words; reading is thinking and understanding. It is a developmental process in which children progress at different rates. Children draw on their prior life experiences and prior knowledge of language to become readers.

In Kindergarten and Grade 1, children will begin with the French language and they will be exposed to informal reading in French. Formal reading instruction in French should only occur in Grade 2.

During a student’s first two years in French Immersion, priority should must be given to the development of French oral language. To do so requires a significant amount of time. However, this investment of time provides a necessary and solid base for the future development of the student’s literacy skills.

What is formal reading in French begin in Grade 2 in the French Immersion Program?

The Manitoba Kindergarten to Grade 12 French provincial curriculum for the French Immersion Program outlines expectations for reading instruction in French. In accordance with these learning expectations, students should engage in informal reading instruction in Kindergarten and Grade 1 and in formal reading instruction beginning in Grade 2. Reading expectations as well as progress are communicated regularly to parents throughout the school year, and the Provincial Report Card should closely adhere to the mandated learning expectations. All school divisions are required to implement the provincial curriculum.

What is meant by informal reading instruction and formal reading instruction in the French Immersion Program?

Your child will constantly be exposed to reading and will progressively develop reading skills.

What is meant by informal reading instruction and what does this look like?

- Helps develop: ability to connect text to prior knowledge, concepts about print, love of reading, oral language, sense of story, vocabulary.
- Models appropriate: imitation, pronunciation, rhythm and phrasing.
- Develops: an ear for the French language and its sounds.

What is meant by formal reading instruction and what is this look like?

- Helps develop: awareness of how authors construct stories, ability to connect oral experiences, understanding that story and pictures are connected, vocabulary.
- Helps build: fluency, self-confidence and motivation.
- Allows students to: experience the teacher’s rereading of books with different instructional intentions, participate in and enjoy books with repetitive structures, see themselves as readers, use new and familiar reading strategies in a non-threatening, risk-taking environment, use vocabulary and oral language in a meaningful way (e.g., In English, “to be” is expressed differently in French depending on the situation, e.g., “Je fais” literally translates to “I have hunger”).

What does guided reading look like?

- The teacher introduces a variety of texts to the student’s instructional group and to plan next steps for student’s learning.
- Guided reading engages students in conversation to activate prior knowledge, deepens understanding, and express ideas.
- It helps students to see themselves as readers and teaches them to make appropriate book selections.
- It provides opportunities to use mistakes as a part of learning.
- It promotes opportunities for goal setting.
- It teaches reading and comprehension strategies and offers students the opportunity to select appropriate strategies when problem solving.

What does independent reading look like?

- The student chooses texts to read independently for academic purposes or for pleasure.

What are the similarities and differences between the English and the French language?

- There are many similarities between the English and the French language. When your child begins to read in English in Grade 1, these similarities can be transferred to reading in French in Grade 2. However, differences also exist between the two languages and these do not transfer from English to French. Your child needs exposure to the French language to be able to acquire this knowledge.

- Alphabets are identical in appearance.
- Decoding, word recognition, and spelling skills follow the same rules and require similar skills.
- Words can be broken into smaller parts and sounds are combined to form words.
- Reading is done from left to right, ideas and sentences follow one another, and tests continue from one page to the other.
- Comprehension strategies are transferable from one language to another.
- Stories are built in a similar fashion, having a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Texts either stimulate the imagination or provide background information.
- Background knowledge and cultural knowledge are needed to develop comprehension.
- Strong language skills and deeper thinking are developed through shared reading experiences between parents and their children.
- Home literacy skills are necessary to ensure success.

- Pronunciation is different for specific sounds.
- Letters might look the same but have different names or represent different sounds (e.g., the letter “v” in French is pronounced the same as the letter “w” in English).
- Words are not placed in the same order in sentences (e.g., “ca pomer roug” literally translated would be “The apple red”).
- The French language contends with masculine and feminine genders in texts (e.g., Adjectives and pronouns).
- Some letters are silent when speaking, but appear in the written word (e.g., In French, “mort” is pronounced “mor”, plurals and ending consonants are silent).
- Some letter sounds can be represented in many ways in writing (e.g., In French, the sound “o” can be written as “o, au, eau”, or “au”).
- Expressions in both languages will use different verbs. In the following examples “to be” is expressed differently in French depending on the situation (e.g., “Jai fame” literally translates to “I have hunger”).

Who decides when formal reading should begin in French in the French Immersion Program?

To answer the question of Reading of the National Council of Teachers of English, 2013, p. 3-4)