



# Vernon School District sets record French immersion enrolment

More than 13 per cent of district students in French immersion

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French immersion is on the rise across British Columbia, and Vernon is at the core of that movement.

According to a report released Sept. 4, more students in British Columbia are participating in French immersion than ever before. As of the 2017-2018 school year, 1,182 or 13.7 per cent of the entire school body in School District 22 (Vernon) were registered in the program. Province-wide, 53,487 or 9.5 per cent were enrolled in French immersion.

The report showed that province-wide, French immersion enrolment has been increasing for 20 consecutive years. Enrolment in SD 22 has also hit yet another record this year.

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As a result of the booming popularity of this well-established program, districts around the province are scrambling to find enough qualified teachers and teaching assistants.

“French immersion is a well established and highly regarded program,” said Diane Tijman, president of Canadian Parents for French BC and Yukon.

“Designed to help students become functionally bilingual by the time they graduate, the program’s effects are very real, empowering young people and opening doors in so many different ways.”

Since the first class opened in St. Lambert, Quebec in 1965, more than one million Canadians have benefited from the program.

According to Stats Canada, Canadians who speak both French and English earn, on average, 10 per cent more and have a lower unemployment rate compared to Canadians who only speak one of two official languages.

As well, there are cognitive developmental benefits of learning an additional language, such as stronger listening skills, improved focus and concentration, increased ability to understand complex problems and higher tolerance, insight and understanding of other cultures.

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newstips@vernonmorningstar.com

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