

## How can I get involved at the school level?

Attending school functions, going to parent-teacher interviews, volunteering in the classroom, helping out elsewhere in the school, joining in class outings, participating in school decisions and on committees, actively supporting your francophone spouse's involvement – these are just a few of the possibilities. It all depends on your personality, schedule and comfort in French. But no matter what avenue you choose, you're showing your children that their education is important to you. Isn't that the whole point of participating in the first place?

## Here are a few things you can do

- ☆ If you want to volunteer in the classroom, meet with your children's teacher to determine your respective comfort levels, then find the common ground that will satisfy you both.
- ☆ Be aware of the fact that many teachers accept only limited use of English in their classroom because they want and need to maintain a strong French-speaking atmosphere.
- ☆ No matter what task you end up doing, remember that every bit of assistance ultimately helps enhance the educational experience for all children.
- ☆ If you're going to give a presentation in the classroom, meet with the teacher in advance to draw up a list of keywords in French. Use the list during your presentation; write the words on the blackboard or distribute copies.



**To find out more about exogamous families,**  
we suggest that you read *I'm with you! Exogamous families' guide to the world of francophone education.*

**To order a guide, contact the**  
**Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique**  
at 223-1555 West 7th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V6J 1S1.

**You can also call us at 604-736-5056 or 1-800-905-5056,**  
**fax at 604-736-1259 or email us at [info@pfcb.bc.ca](mailto:info@pfcb.bc.ca).**  
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# I'm with you!



**Exogamous families' guide**  
**to the world of**  
**francophone education**



Fédération des parents  
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# ABC

## Exogamy – what a word!

In the context of Canada's linguistic duality, it's defined as a union between two people with different mother tongues and cultural backgrounds.

British Columbia's francophone community is about 60,000, or 1.5 percent of the population; 72 percent live in exogamous families and 29 percent speak French at home.

## What

### What is francophone education anyway?

The main goal of any school system is to provide the basic educational experience needed to ensure students' intellectual, emotional and social development. Minority-language schools are no exception. However, they also have a complementary, twofold objective: to develop, maintain and enhance students' French language skills and culture, and at the same time contribute to the vitality of the francophone community. In concrete terms, this means enriching students' learning with relevant cultural references.

**Francophone education is intended for a French-speaking clientele:** instruction takes place entirely in French, and at least one parent in the vast majority of eligible families understands French. Just as English is the common language in the anglophone system, French is the common language in the francophone system.

All the information in this brochure is taken from *I'm with you! Exogamous families' guide to the world of francophone education*, published by the Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta, 2002. The author, Glen Taylor is a native Albertan. He is the anglophone half of an exogamous couple. Glen has always been very active in his two children's schooling, in a Francophone school.

## Why does it have to be so... French?

From an early age, children notice things and reflect on matters more than we think. Youngsters hear their parents discussing school matters with each other and with other parents. They observe their parents and other adults during school-related activities. They bring home newsletters and information from the teacher, school administration, parent advisory council and school board. Although they may say nothing, children quickly learn whether French is used only in the classroom or throughout the school system.

When French is used consistently throughout the system, it sends a clear message to children that communicating *en français* isn't merely an academic exercise confined to the classroom. Rather, they see French as a relevant language that adults use in the outside world as well. Knowing that adults use French in real-life situations validates students' francophone educational experience. In many respects, this kind of positive reinforcement helps make their schooling an affirmative life experience.

## Here are a few things you can do

- Understand and respect the fact that every component of the francophone school system must operate in French. Expect to be greeted in French whenever you visit your children's francophone school.
- Make an effort to speak French in and around school, even if your French isn't that good. Just saying *Bonjour* when you arrive at school will make a big difference.
- Think of your children: what message do you send them when you speak nothing but English in their francophone school?
- Let francophone parents know that you share their desire to create a meaningful French-language educational and life experience for all the children in the school.
- If you understand more French than you speak, insist that your francophone peers communicate in French even though you have to use English to express your ideas.
- If you wish to participate in parent advisory council meetings, familiarize yourself with the issues beforehand and learn some keywords in French so you can better follow and participate in the discussion.

## How can I participate in my children's education?

Parents play a central role in promoting language use as part of the family bonding process. You can build your own family culture by using French creatively and consistently in different home situations. Help out with as much homework as you can – especially in English language arts – and take an active interest in your children's schooling.

## Here are a few things you can do

- Listen to French radio and music.
- Watch TV and videos in French (DVDs allow you to select the language you want to watch a movie in).
- Play board and card games in French.
- Read to your children in French.
- Hire French-speaking babysitters.
- Join and regularly visit your provincial French-language resource centre, where you'll find items such as books, videos, DVDs and games.

