

Bienvenue to all bilingual and multilingual families

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If you are looking for a school for your child, the Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE) has a list of at least 65 good reasons why you should register in one of their 38 elementary schools and 10 high schools. As part of the launch of a new awareness campaign to promote a French-language Catholic education, the CECCE appealed to parents to exercise their constitutional right to educate their children in French and focussed on the importance of making informed decisions.

To communicate with more multilingual families and those where only one parent speaks French, the CECCE has released bilingual publications and media messages, as well as radio commercials with students speaking in French, English, Creole, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. “In public consultations the board held with parents, they told us that more needed to be done to reach out to families that speak more than one language at home,” said the CECCE Chair Diane Doré. “We listened to them, and we hope to reach all families, including those that know little or nothing about us.”

Parents and their children can also view a new video featuring two French-English families who talk about their experiences with one child going directly into junior kindergarten and another moving to a French-language school after several years in an immersion program. It also includes explanations by professional educators of how students who speak little or no French are supported in the CECCE schools, which is the largest network of French-language Catholic schools outside Quebec.

A major message of the awareness campaign at the launch was that a French-language education is not just for Francophone families and that French Immersion is not the only option for bilingual families. Lise Bourgeois, the CECCE’s Director of Education, wanted to correct any misconceptions about the board’s clientele by stating that over 40 percent of Francophones spoke English at home and that about 60 percent of its potential clientele were families where only one parent spoke French. She also claimed that attending a French-language Catholic school is different from the French immersion program because it involves language, culture and values in its daily school life.

While the importance of a real French-language education is the main priority of the campaign, it also highlights the advantages of lifelong bilingualism by teaching English in grade four with the aim of producing fluently bilingual high school

graduates. Other stated advantages of attending a CECCE school include: a free full-day junior and senior kindergarten program; childcare services for preschool and school-aged children; homework help and support programs; a personalized teaching method based on a Montessori approach available at some schools; one computer for every five high school students; and expert assistance for special education.

To be eligible for a French-language Catholic education at a CECCE school, under the Canadian Charter of Rights and the Education Act of Ontario and its regulations, certain conditions must be met by students and their families. Ontario students must live within the CECCE territory and have a father, mother or tutor who pays taxes for the CECCE board. The first language of one of the parents, or guardians, must be French and they must have had a Canadian elementary education in French. Students can be registered from junior kindergarten to grade 12 at any time at the school or the board's offices.

For more information and to view the video, [Une véritable éducation en français/A REAL French Education](#), visit the CECCE online at www.ecolecatholique.ca. Or contact the board in Ottawa by calling 613 744-2555 and 1 888 230-5131.

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