

## **Canadian Parents for French helps parents choose the right French language program**

By Monika Ferenczy

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) is the national network of volunteers that values French as an integral part of Canada and is dedicated to the promotion and creation of French second language learning opportunities for young Canadians. The Ottawa Chapter of CPF offers information, resources and networking for parents in the Ottawa area, in addition to organizing activities for students to use French.

Since Ottawa is a region offering many bilingual education opportunities, parents often face difficult choices when considering the right program for their child. Several factors include a Francophone parent's right to enrol his or her child in French language education, the proximity of the nearest school, the level of involvement a parent seeks with the school and the comfort level of the parent in the use of the French language. Parents of special needs children also seek programs where support for their child does not come at the expense of giving up a bilingual learning experience.

Currently many new Canadians arrive with their families and lack information at immigration entry points on the available choice of education programs offered by each school board. CPF is a community resource available to help inform and provide orientation for families towards the education system which best responds to the educational experience they seek for their children. Consultation is free and is available via email, phone or in person.

The CPF Ottawa Chapter also works in partnership with many Francophone community groups to provide additional experiences for students to use French outside the classroom, and to enrich the classroom curriculum through French-speaking artists and speakers. A provincial French public speaking event for Core French, Extended French, French Immersion and Francophone students enrolled in the English language school boards is just one example of a highly successful program. Summer day camps, French Storytime, French Music & Play groups, Career exploration camps, student exchanges, and high school student volunteering opportunities are further examples of successful initiatives for the preschool to the post-secondary age group of students.

The best free opportunity parents can give their child is an experience in a French language learning program, regardless of the child's ability. It is an investment in the future of the child and the community, in addition to contributing to better employment prospects.

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