



As the youngest teacher at Burnaby's Ecole Brantford Elementary, Eliesse Harpaz proves that French Immersion opens up doors. At 23, Eliesse was hired by her alma mater to teach full time in a Grade 5/6 split French Immersion class.

"Most new teachers have to substitute when they first start out, but I never did ... I went right into my own classroom," says the now 25-year-old, adding French came easily to her. "I credit my mom for immersing me in the language. My mother was adamant that I learn another language, because she felt I would have more opportunities in life if I pursued French."

Eliesse attended French Immersion throughout elementary and high school. She also participated in several Concours d'art oratoire district competitions, and was a junior leader and then leader with Vancouver Island's BC Family French Camp.

One of Eliesse fondest memories was a Grade 11 school trip to France, walking along the famous Champs-Elysées Street with her classmates listening to Parisians speak.

“As for exchanges, I also participated in the Explore program twice, the first at the University du Quebec a Trois-Rivieres (UQTR), and the second at University de Montreal (UdeM),” says Eliesse. “These are great government-sponsored programs that everyone should take advantage of.”

That’s not all. Eliesse volunteered with programs such as Forum for Young Canadian in Ottawa, where French came in very handy.

It was in Grade 11 that Eliesse decided she would continue her French studies. She received a Bachelor of Arts with a Major in French from Simon Fraser University (SFU), before attending the University of B.C. for a Bachelors of Education.

She can’t emphasise enough how being multilingual has enriched her life.

“There is so much value in being able to speak our country’s two official languages... it makes connecting and traveling much more interesting,” says Eliesse.

Meantime, for her students Eliesse hopes to inspire them to see the value and many advantages to speaking French.