

# SALUT LES JEUNES!

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*Vive la rentrée!* The beginning of the school year brings new language learners to the French classroom as well as our returning students. Few young people have the good fortune to have contact with the target language over the summer, so every minute counts as we reconnect with our students to the French environment. Giving the students, *même les débutants complets*, the tools to remain within the language during our limited time with them is essential. Textbooks tend to be reluctant to give directions in French in order to avoid frustration on the part of the student. However, even new students can navigate through a class with instructions and explanations in French. Every moment of the class is a teaching opportunity, and the more repetition of directions in a supportive environment will soon have the students comfortable with an all-French classroom.

*ANTISÈCHE*-We give students a "cheat-sheet" or *ANTISÈCHE* which they keep at the front of their French folder. *Sécher* is slang for "to flunk," so an *antisèche* helps to avoid failure! For the youngest students, we go over a limited number of commands that they will hear consistently (*écoutez, répondez, répétez, regarder, fermez, ouvrez*) with a few questions or statements they can access to keep interaction in French: *Je ne sais pas. Comment dit-on "help!" en français? Puis-je aller aux toilettes? Comment ça s'écrit?* For older students, I include grammatical terms (*le sujet, le verbe, la terminaison, singulier, pluriel*) as well as the names of the accents: *l'accent aigu (bébé); l'accent grave (mère); la cédille (garçon); l'accent circonflexe (l'hôtel); le tréma (Noël)*. Try increasing goals for keeping the class entirely in French as the semester progresses. Giving a *chronomètre* to one student to keep track of time is an added incentive. Achievement of an entire class in French is worth a few cookies. It is practical to save the last few minutes of class time for questions in English and summary of what was covered during class to ensure comprehension.

*ALPHABET-COMMENT ÇA S'ÉCRIT?* Learning to recite the alphabet in French may seem like an extraneous or superfluous activity when our class time is so limited, but in the long run it is a constructive investment of time. Students are proud to be able to spell their French names using the alphabet, and this is a great base for working with the phonetic challenges between English and French. There are numerous games that can be played to reinforce the sounds. A quick one at the recognition level is to write on the board or on paper a list of letters. Then ask the students to cross out (*rayez*) the letters you pronounce, leaving a secret message. A B C D H J O U C Q O M L E I A P Z T. Call out all but the letters that spell *chocolat*. That is a cognate even young learners will recognize!

My favorite game is a standard exercise for improv theater groups. Create a set of index cards with situations for students to act out. Two students will perform, and the class will guess the situation. The actors will communicate reciting only a few consecutive letters of the alphabet each up to the end of the alphabet. It's a delightful exercise as comprehension must be related through gesture and intonation since the dialogue exchange is "ABCDE?" "FGHIJK. LM! NOP!" Sample situations might be a child asking a mother if he can go play soccer with friends and the mother is refusing, a child bringing home a terrible grade and an unhappy parent responding, a young man trying to ask a reluctant girl on a date. Create your own or have the students invent new ones. This works well with any series (numbers, days of the week, etc.) that needs repetition for learning. *Amusez-vous bien!*

We invite FLES\* and middle school teachers to share ideas, classroom gimmicks, games for oral interaction, National French Week activities, and successful lessons with other AATF members. Join the teacher network! Send your ideas to Elizabeth Miller, 74 Tuscaloosa Avenue, Atherton, CA 94027; e-mail: [mmemiller@aol.com]; fax: 650-342-7623.

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