

YOUR FRENCH PROGRAM IS WORTH SAVING

What are some of the challenges of declining enrollments? (1) assessing the future of graduate literature programs; (2) going beyond literature to attract majors; (3) encouraging vs. discouraging split majors; (4) dwindling enrollments in grades 5-8; (5) attracting students; (6) assessing the usefulness of French.

What are some of the negative attitudes that might thwart language teaching? (1) language as enrichment rather than core subject; (2) language as part of a gifted/talented or special project; (3) language not part of a "school-to-work" curriculum; (4) languages and literatures as "high culture" subjects; (5) difficulty recruiting qualified teachers; (6) funding shortfalls; funding is presently based on literacy and numeracy; (7) relative difficulty of learning a language; (8) reduced contact hours; (9) global studies programs with no language requirement.

What is advocacy and how does it differ from promotion?

Promotion is advertising; we tell people what we want them to know about French. *La Semaine du français* is a prime example of this type of campaign. Those who are advocates respond to more fundamental problems at a program level—how to retain or increase necessary funding for a program; how to avoid cuts in requirements or to increase requirements, how to impact school board policies affecting languages.

Newly-elected Vice-President Barbara Ransford described her personal battle with the Arkansas legislature when, during her tenure as AATF Chapter President, a Senator proposed Spanish as the primary foreign language in the state. Ransford re-

lated her scramble to round up a coalition of colleagues who could testify about the importance of many languages and thus prevent the bill from being passed. Ransford stressed the need to be vigilant, to watch which way the politicians are leaning, and to put together a defensive team before they are needed. "Don't sit back!" she urged members. "Know your clientele and be vocal."

Teachers who promote French and teachers who advocate for French need to work together, and often their efforts will overlap. They need to build their own resources: (1) find local business people who promote languages in their business; (2) outline French moments in American and local history; (3) locate well-known people in your state/community who speak French; (4) profile the local school districts and colleges/universities in your area; and (5) use available resources such as the French Embassy or Consulates, Invest in France Agency, *Alliances françaises*, French-American Chamber of Commerce, world trade organizations, etc.

The AATF Advocacy Depot provides many ideas for chapters on how to mobilize their troops at the grassroots level. AATF Vice-President "Tennessee" Bob Peckham has developed templates for "New York Needs French/Tennessee Needs French" and encourages local advocates to begin to gather information on the status of French in their state for their own "state Web page." He also needs stories of advocacy projects—those which have worked as well as those which have not—to document and pass on to others. For assistance or to share your story, contact [bobp@utm.edu]. Check out the AATF Web site for updates.