

NATIONAL FRENCH WEEK ACTIVITIES THAT WORK

When I took over at South Iredell High School three years ago, there was only one French class. Now we have grown to accommodate five levels of French, with the possibility of implementing an AP level next year. Our school has a little over 1000 students and we have three Spanish teachers, one of whom is qualified to teach French should my program grow to need two teachers.

One of the things my French III students did was to prepare information sheets about how French is tied into all other academic subjects. While I covered English, physical education, and social studies, my students covered drafting, parenting, dance, art, music, drama, science, Spanish, apparel and foods. (The only subject we did not cover was math.) They typed up attractive sheets, keeping facts to just front and back. I then made copies and distributed them to each of the teachers at the beginning of the week, requesting that they weave this material into their lesson plans some time during the week. Many responded with positive comments. One English teacher gave her students the sheet where they had to identify the meaning of the French words used in English, and connect famous French authors with their works, while she dug out her photos of her latest trip to France, all the while promoting the importance of study abroad. An artistic French III student made a large red, white, and blue sign which said "National French Week," then my French II students put it up on the wall outside the classroom. I also let them decorate my large bulletin board full of French flags, posters, and original replicas of paintings they had painted from copying real French impressionist paintings in class. (I told them everyone could paint with small brush strokes, or "blobs," without using lines, to capture and imitate this style.) The whole hallway was covered in French paraphernalia.

Another thing I did was prepare a list of French facts which the students read over the morning announcements. They all dealt with French-countries, a different one each day. In order to help the French I students see the connection, we got the menu from the cafeteria ahead of time, and translated it into French. The manager then taped our translation to the doors into the kitchen each day. Ms. Gray, the cafeteria manager, was a delight to work with, and even went out of her way to provide grapes and French fries each day, French bread two days, a *tarte aux pommes*, and a *mousse au chocolat* on the menu. Given the limited margin she had to work in, I was grateful for her cooperation. She even went so far as to write on her serving windows "Happy French Week," which the students enjoyed!

As a way to express my gratitude to the teachers for their cooperation with our flyers, I provided breakfast for them in the teacher's lounge. On a blue tablecloth decorated with French and Quebec flags, I offered croissants, cream puffs, French bread, butter, jam, and Nutella. Brewing in two pots was French Roast coffee. I have honestly never seen that room so crowded. There were no leftovers, and they even drank all the coffee. I received compliments and thank you's all day.

Additionally, in an effort to thank the students for their help, I provided a French breakfast for the two morning classes. We do this occasionally when we study food vocabulary, so it is still a treat for them. They help by bringing in some of the provisions, but we always offer one pot of coffee, and one of hot water so we can serve *chocolat chaud*, which most students prefer anyway. There is always French bread, butter, jam, and of course, their favorite, Nutella. We also had croissants and pastries. Needless to say, they must use their French when in line, telling me what they prefer, and saying *s'il vous plait* and *merci* before sitting down.

Finally, since we only offer French at the high school level, I wanted to promote our program to the middle school students. However, despite both principals' approval, the connection with the teachers wasn't confirmed, so we couldn't go. We did, however, do something which I think was perhaps more meaningful to my students. We visited the severe and profound class in our school instead. With the teacher's permission, we all went down armed with song posters, the color wheel, paper to color on, and European chocolate biscuits. At first the students were a little afraid, not knowing what to expect from these students, but as time passed, they felt more comfortable mingling with them, helping them hold the crayons and admiring their pictures. This French II class loves to sing, so they led the exceptional students in "Frère Jacques" and "Alouette." When we returned to our classroom, I had my students write journal entries on their experience. They have decided they want to return at Christmas time to sing carols to this class.

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