

PROMOTION IN MOTION: AFFIRM FRENCH

Think back for a moment to your college years when you were officially preparing yourself for a career as a French teacher! You couldn't get enough of the language, the culture, the literature, the techniques for teaching others this wonderful language that meant so much to you! You couldn't wait to create all those super materials that you learned about in methods courses because they would help you fulfill the dream you cherished of bringing your love of French to children and/or adolescents in your classroom!

When you finally were appointed to your first full time position, your enthusiasm was boundless! You decorated your classroom (if you were fortunate enough to have one) with a myriad of colorful posters and hundreds of miscellaneous Francophone realia because you wanted your five overflowing sections of French students to be just as passionate about this romantic language as you were! And, if the spirit moved you, you'd take that plane to France with a sizable group of students who wanted so much to use the language that you had painstakingly taught them. To put it in a nutshell, French was fabulous! Enrollment was high, parental support was outstanding, and job security was guaranteed.

Then, slowly but surely, the United States began to be the home of countless Hispanics who seemed to settle just about everywhere. Spanish became the language of choice and you were forced to confront decreased enrollments in French. Often, to preserve a full-time position in your school, you too had to go back to school to learn Spanish and reluctantly, you accepted to teach it. Like a faded photograph, your excitement and enthusiasm for French began to dim. You became despondent, your creativity suffered, and the seeds of pessimism and defeat began to take root. Like the fond memory of your first homerun, your first tricycle, or your first best friend, you tucked the memory of your first French classroom into a corner of your heart, wrapped in the enthusiasm that once was.

Wait a minute! It's 1998! It's time to unwrap that "love of French package" and rekindle the passion you once had! You've been given a second chance! It's time to "AFFIRM FRENCH"!

Attitude. What makes customers return to a restaurant, a hotel, a business? It's often the attitude of the employees who staff these establishments! If we as French teachers want to lure students back or keep the ones we have from one year to the next, we have to make a serious effort. It's time to smile and project to the students that French is not only worthwhile

but fun! Show them that you love your job and let them know how lucky they are to be in your classroom!

Flexibility. As we get older, we often tend to be more comfortable with schedules and lesson plans that don't allow for much variation. However, it's time for a bit of fresh air to combat the staleness! In the middle of book exercises or tedious vocabulary drills, pop in a "commercial"! Use the structure or vocabulary that you're teaching and talk about some aspect of the Francophone world! (If you're not that spontaneous, plan it ahead and insert it in your plan book. We won't tell!) Set up a Francophone "current events" bulletin board and ask students to cut out articles from newspapers and magazines once a week. Start or end your class each day with a new Francophone fact or facet. From fashion to flights to Paris, switch gears and keep them excited. (You can count these articles as a homework assignment.)

Francophone travel. You haven't done a trip to a French-speaking country in years? Then now is the time to reconsider! Choose a travel company and an itinerary, recruit your students, and think of all the realia, music, books, etc. that you can bring back to decorate your classroom *à la franco!* Another alternative is to plan a field trip to a Francophone restaurant, play, art exhibition, etc. Check your specific area for opportunities! *Les Miz* is playing all around the country!

Image. Consider this. Dress slacks or skirt, blazer, AATF *pin's*, T-shirt that promotes French! Foreign language catalogs offer them quite frequently and if you make a stop at the main office and the guidance office sporting this attire, you'll be promoting French to the people with a direct influence on your class size! In addition, consider encouraging your students to promote French in the same way for extra credit! Buy some AATF mouse pads for your computer lab. Give your administrators and guidance counselors an AATF mug (for their frequent coffee breaks!) Hand out AATF pens to your "top" students each semester!

Rewards. Invest in stickers and consider rewarding students who receive a perfect score (no bonus points added in) on a quiz or test. Set up a system where a certain number of stickers can be exchanged for a homework or quiz coupon and watch the excitement build! (Students often feel that you're "giving things away" when in reality you're promoting good study skills and increased performance!).

Music. Use this option and you're teaching to one of the multiple intelligences! There are hundreds of tapes/

CDs of Francophone singers and there are others that teach specific grammatical structures and concepts. Check in teaching catalogs or purchase them yourself in your travels to Francophone countries!

Food. If you feed them, they will come. Taco Bell, move over! It's time for "elegant" dining in your classroom! French bread, cheeses, *crêpes*, *éclairs*, *crème caramel*, couscous, Belgian waffles—the list goes on and on. For a really novel treat in any part of the country where there is snow, collect some clean snow, pour maple syrup over it, and pass out bowls of it to your students. The French-Canadians have done this for years! (Be sure to send samples of anything you serve to the main office and guidance office. You want them to remember you when the students register for classes next year!) In addition, don't forget to celebrate all the holidays—*la bûche de Noël*, *Mardi Gras* cake, *les œufs de Pâques*—and try a *petit déjeuner à la française* (croissants and *chocolat chaud*) the first Friday of every month for your morning classes and *un goûter of pâtisseries* for your afternoon sections. They'll love it!

Reach out program. Contact your local newspaper to inform them of any special activities that you're doing with your students. Have foreign language fairs, have your students create plays based on a literary selection and invite the community to a presentation. On a smaller scale, display student work prominently for open house and dress in the colors of a Francophone country when you greet parents. It's all part of projecting an image!

Employment opportunities. Download articles on reasons to study French that relate to jobs and create a binder with copies of these articles along with newspaper classified ads that require/prefer French or foreign language. Major newspapers like the *Boston Globe*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and *Chicago Tribune* are excellent resources for such a file. Display the binder at open house and keep it available as a reference for your students.

Net activities. Familiarize yourself with the Internet to see what's available. For starters, check out "Tennessee Bob's Famous French Links" at [<http://www.utm.edu/departments/french/french.html>] and create simple activities that your students can do with a French Web site. It's an "out of class" experience that appeals to the vast majority of students and it's a great way of integrating culture and technology into the curriculum.

Culture. This does not only refer to what's in your textbook or on the Internet! Lancôme, Évian, Orangina, Dior,

La vache qui rit, YSL, etc. are available in stores across the country! Have your students bring in advertisements or packaging to decorate a bulletin board. In addition, don't forget newspaper/magazine articles about French Canadian hockey teams, the World Cup, the *Tour de France*, and French films, to mention just a few.

Happy hour. Choose a classroom period sometime during the year (several if you're highly motivated!) and have your students make coloring books illustrating the vocabulary they have been studying. These can be labeled and sent to students in elementary schools in your district. (Start recruiting as early as you can!) It's a great idea for PR, and *Perrier* with *baguettes* and *fromage* makes everyone happy!

Hopefully, this article has piqued your interest and brought back a bit of the sparkle that characterized your first teaching assignment however long or short ago that was!

Dare to dream!

Dare to increase enrollment by your enthusiasm!

Dare to **AFFIRM FRENCH!**

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