

AMITY SMALL GRANT REPORT

Thanks to a grant from both the national AATF and my local chapter in Minnesota, I was able to welcome an Amity intern from France for our second semester of the 2009-2010 school year. Our intern spent about five hours per day helping with all four levels of French classes. He stayed with an employee from a district elementary school and her family. He also attended an AP literature class so that he could get a taste of what an American high school class was like (other than the French classes) and so that he could practice his English reading and writing skills.

During his stay, our Amity intern did about a half dozen presentations where he spoke in French about himself and his interests, school in France, regional dishes, Burkina Faso (where he had done an internship), and Paris. He assisted during game time, monitored students during speaking activities, helped students prepare for speaking finals, and chose an expression to teach the kids each week. In addition, I tried to only speak French with him so that I could have that much needed practice, as I am the only French teacher for miles. We made sure he got to experience the "fun" elements of high school life, so he of course helped us chaperone both French field trips and ones for other classes as well. In addition, he was able to attend Prom as a chaperone. He also had the opportunity to travel to New York and Minneapolis with his host family. We kept him busy!

Our intern was pretty quiet and reserved for his first month, which I've seen before with other visiting teachers. I know from personal experience that French schools and American schools can be quite different. French schools tend to be stricter, and students don't have the same kind of friendly relationship with their teachers. However, we did see a big change in his personality over the months as he grew more comfortable.

He became very accustomed to the American school system and perhaps misinterpreted what it meant to be on more friendly terms with the kids. I think he enjoyed having this American high school experience so unlike his own in France. Nothing inappropriate occurred, but it can be difficult for these young interns to know where they fit in. They may be or recently have been students themselves, but they are expected to fulfill a more professional adult role as an Amity intern. Out of at least one dozen interns I've worked with over the years, this was the first time I had an issue. I would encourage any teacher who participates in

this program to be very clear about what is expected and what professional conduct means. Despite this one misunderstanding we had in his last month, our Amity aide really got kids excited about French and about their own abilities. I feel that we were very fortunate to have had this experience, and I thank the AATF for their support in helping us. I wouldn't hesitate to participate in the program again, but as previously stated, I would be even more vigilant about voicing expectations in the future.

Emily Benidt Wakefield
Austin High School (MN)
[ewakefield@austin.k12.mn.us]