

SMALL GRANT REPORT: AATF *JOURNÉE INTENSIVE* 2010

The comments on this page are a few of the student comments answering the question, "What was your favorite part of the immersion day?" These comments reflect the favorite part of the program for all of us who have become involved in these *Journées intensives en français*.

Everyone speaks French!

The Immersion Day was designed to provide an extended period for skill-use activities in French. With so much grammar, vocabulary, literature, and culture to introduce, practice, and test each school year, there is little time for this type of creative and free communication during tightly packed class time.

Recalling material covered in the past, reusing and recombining vocabulary and idiomatic expressions in a grammatical framework in order to express one's own ideas are difficult tasks which need repetition over long periods. Listening comprehension takes time to perfect.

Another important aspect of this activity is the opportunity to interact with French speakers, other than one's own teacher(s) and classmates.

Language learners need to adapt to different accents and ways of speaking. They need to be taken out of their relatively comfortable and familiar classroom setting, plopped down in a "foreign environment," and required to communicate without recourse to English.

We were inspired by the magnificent efforts of Luz María N. Berd who created the George Williams College immersion weekends which ran for 25 years. She based them on the "Middlebury Model" of a language pledge and complete immersion in the language, literature, and culture of the target language.

About 65 students from 14 Chicago-

Being too occupied to think in English

area public and private high schools attended this second immersion day. There were eight teacher participants from five of the schools—Lisa Andersen, Leah Bolek, Christi Castensen, Elaine Dively, William Ham, Maureen Madden, Laura Siebert, and Eileen Walvoord, President of the Chicago/Northern Illinois AATF Chapter.

The majority of students were in level three (31) with about 17 each in levels

two and four/five. As can be expected, the level three and four/five students were more comfortable expressing themselves and understanding what was said to them.

The first activity of the day required going through "customs," in which the participants had to show their "passports" to the "customs agent," answer questions, and explain some of the strange objects in their paper "suitcases." They went on to a room filled with various board games which they could play until the official introduction, language pledge, and countdown. They then proceeded to two formal sessions.

Half of the group attended a class on Monet, taught by Maria Demucci Schoon, in which they recreated some of his paintings, and a mystery game aboard a cruise ship, taught by Andrea Isabelli. The other half of the group attended Kristina Beck's science-based class on the five senses and a class on Paris by Monique Tranchevent.

Everyone stayed with their second

Meeting new people & talking French all day

teacher to play a guessing game identifying objects hidden in paper bags. These words were a resource to help them create the original skits they would be presenting in the afternoon. After lunch, everyone sang and danced, and finally each small group presented their skit. We had a small treat to eat, Carambars, which Mme Tranchevent brought from her recent trip to Paris.

Group assistants included Christina Anderson, Zerrin Bulut, Marnie Goodfriend, Margarita Levasseur, Françoise Mishinger, Sophia Petrakos, Laura Schmuck, and Jodie Sloan. Lisa Nordmeyer was our host, AV consultant, and site coordinator. The event was held at West Leyden High School in Northlake. Kristen Aswell created the passports, Lynn Robinson served as technical director, and Donna Czarnecki and Patricia Olderr are the co-directors.

An innovation this year were the blue tee-shirts made by Bill Weber and the Woodstock North High School print shop staff, long sleeved for the staff and directors, and short sleeved for the participants. The front extolled, "Fêtons le monde Francophone!" On the back was the subtle reminder of the language pledge, "Communiquons en français!" The AATF was acknowledged as the

principle sponsor. Many thanks go to Donna Czarnecki and Andrea Isabelli for the design.

Thanks go to Dr. Beth Concannon, principal of West Leyden High School, for allowing us the use of their facilities and for encouraging and supporting this type of activity.

As the evaluations were turned in, participants were invited to choose prizes, many of which were donated by TV5Monde and the National French Contest, as a reward for speaking French all day. After the countdown, the language pledge was lifted and the day ended.

J'ai parlé français tout le temps!

In the evaluations, we found that some of the students, who had attended the Immersion Day last year, missed the croissants and *chocolat chaud* we had provided for breakfast. We plan to bring that back next year, but earlier in the morning so as not to take time away from the principle activities.

The general feeling we had was that everyone had a good time, whether they always had the right word or understood everything said to them or started dancing on the correct foot or were on the right page in the song packet. This day, devoted to speaking French and learning more about French culture, was an enjoyable, enriching experience for everyone involved.

We are grateful to both the national and local AATF and the *Consulat de France à Chicago*, which, through their generous support, have made this immersion day possible.

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