

FINAL REPORT ON THE 2014 AATF FRENCH IMMERSION DAY *LA JOURNÉE INTENSIVE EN FRANÇAIS*

The sixth annual AATF French Immersion Day for high school students, *La Journée intensive en français*, took place on March 1, 2014. It was a tremendous success. This year we accepted 87 student-participants from 21 different high schools and eleven teacher-participants. (Ten of the teacher-participants attended in order to accompany their students, whereas the eleventh one was there to check the program out for his students for next year.) Our immersion program has become so popular in Chicago and its suburbs that we had 38 students on our waiting list when the registration deadline arrived! We are sure that those 38 students will be the very first to register for next year's event.

Without a doubt we couldn't have had an immersion day without having motivated and eager-to-participate students. However, having a well-run and successful immersion is another story. The success for our immersion was ultimately due to the entire staff: directors (2), teachers (4), and assistants (12), working together as a team. The staff's love for the French language and culture, their ability to inspire participants to remain in the language for the entire day, their *esprit d'équipe* as they worked at the pre-immersion prep meeting weeks before the event stuffing folders, deciding which *objets* to use for our "Devinez l'objet dans le sac" activity, dividing up prizes for those students who speak French the entire day, choosing students for each group based on their levels in school, creating passports, etc., their enthusiasm for the immersion as evidenced in their work on the day of the event, all added up to facilitate the smooth running of the actual immersion day.

Not only did we need students, directors, and staff to carry out this *Journée intensive en français*, but we needed a venue that would be appropriate for it. We have been fortunate for the past three years that Dean Jeffrey Carlson of Dominican University has offered its facilities to us. In addition, Dave Carlson, director of Scheduling and Event Services, has given us a tremendous amount of help during this time fitting us into Dominican's busy school-year scheduling, assigning us smart classrooms, and reserving for us Dominican's beautiful medieval looking Social Hall for our large group activities. He has also made available AV technicians, janitorial staff for room set-up, and the services of the lunch coordinator. Dr. Beth Landers of the French Department

eagerly joined our staff this year helping out with all aspects including lending her expertise to our assistant director, Lisa Nordstrom, in creating our newest activity—*Une Chasse aux trésors*—which was well received. Dominican's lovely setting and qualified staff certainly added to the success of our program.

Each year the immersion staff offers new classes so that students can attend the immersion two to three years in a row. This year our staff offered the following classes: "Goûtons voir si les fromages sont bons" et "Découvrons la belle Provence" attended by Groups A and B; "La Belgique et son chocolat" et "Le Temps des cathédrales" attended by Groups C and D. Each class revolved around a cultural topic with communication being the central focus. Each group of students had an opportunity to *déguster* a food for which a French-speaking country was well known, either *chocolat* from Belgium or *fromage* from France. In the other two classes students had an opportunity to participate in hands-on activities. In "Le Temps des cathédrales" one of the activities was to create one's own stained glass window (with special paper and cellophane, not glass and lead!) whereas in "Découvrons la belle Provence" students were able to touch, smell, and view objects from Provence while discussing them in small groups.

The day began with activities run by the 12 assistants who are all French teachers (two from middle schools, 7 from high schools, and 3 from the university level.) These activities, whose aim was to get students comfortable with speaking French, took place in the Social Hall. They registered and then passed through customs. They then "bought" *un croissant et un chocolat chaud* at the Café and sat down and chatted with their friends and made new ones. Once their food was finished they then were able to play French table games. We had many from which they could choose. It was only after all these activities were completed that we made them say and then sign our pledge to speak only French the entire day. They were amazed that they had already been speaking French since their arrival without our having forced them to! The afternoon was filled with a variety of activities: the performance of skits that they had prepared earlier in the day, our new activity *La Chasse aux trésors*, French and Canadian folk dancing, and singing. The day ended with our

Distribution des prix for those who made the monumental effort to speak French all day! Everyone received a prize! Before departing, all the participants completed an evaluation.

The majority of the participants gave a 5 (strongly agree) to the evaluation questions asked about the classes and activities. By far the most fun activity for the students was the *Chasse aux trésors*. It will definitely be recreated next year for our seventh Annual French Immersion Day!

We want to thank AATF for the Small Grant that we received. We truly could not have carried out this event without it. We thank the Chicago/Northern Illinois AATF Chapter for their grant, which allowed us to seek a national grant, and for all the positive support and encouragement that Robin Jacobi, President, and the rest of the Executive Council have given us again this year.

La Journée intensive en français lasted only a day. However, its effects are continuing well into the school year and we trust beyond. The many hours, days, and months of work that went into its preparation by so many people were well worth it because of its lasting positive outcome.

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