

FRENCH DAY 2005

The making of French Day 2005 started with grant applications to the Hinsdale South High School Foundation and the AATF. I knew that we would need funds for the traditional breakfast and snacks, but I had to decide on a cultural presentation, perhaps Tahitian dancing. I mentioned to my ballet teacher what I was looking for, and she replied that she had recently hired a wonderful group of Tahitian dancers from The Barefoot Hawaiian troupe for a demonstration in her high school dance class. After determining availability and affordability, the grants were requested, the program was set, and after we were notified that we had gotten the money, the preparations began. Our activities director gave us a small amount of money to help pay the deposit to reserve the dancers. The date was determined by the availability of the auditorium. We always squeeze in between the fall play and the year book photography schedule.

Our program is simple—breakfast in the cafeteria, followed by a recent feature film. This year we showed *Les Choristes*. The cultural presentation took place after lunch, followed by a snack and distribution of prizes (pencils, buttons, t-shirts, whatever I have accumulated over the past year.) The execution is more complicated. I had no trouble acquiring permission to hold the all day in-school field trip, because our principal and faculty have always very kindly supported our efforts. I, in turn, make it clear to our students that they should attend any class that would be difficult to miss or where they need to take a test or do a presentation.

The City of Darien issued a proclamation declaring November 7-13 as National French Week. I printed up the message from President Bush which appeared in the *National Bulletin* and made a display along with various French items in the department display case. Several AP students volunteered to record French cultural anecdotes (culled from *FranceGuide* magazine) for the daily student announcements. Banners labeling almost all the department offices were made up and laminated. Posters went up all over school proclaiming National French Week. Teachers could request via e-mail a name tag in French stating their position that they could attach to their magnetic name badges.

I invited Hinsdale Central and Lyons Township High Schools as well as our junior high schools to attend the performance. Only Donna Czarnecki from Lyons Township was able to bring a group of students, but we all enjoyed getting up on the stage to swivel our hips to the exotic music. A photographer from the local paper showed up

to take pictures of the dancers.

Next year, there are some things I will do differently. The students missed playing games on the stage during the lunch periods, which has proved popular in the past. I tried singing traditional songs, but the first year students who were not familiar with the songs found it difficult to participate. They would have enjoyed the game playing more. I was able to get a lot of kids on the stage for folk dancing, but again that is not something everyone likes.

My 4th year students suggested that I assign jobs to them in advance so that they could be more help, and I would be less busy. As it was, whenever I called upon the French Club, they were there to pitch in. They like having a sense of ownership, and they also like leading the younger students. Next year, we will make up banners for the departments we missed. As I was taking down the posters and banners, some of the teachers mentioned how much they had enjoyed reading them and figuring out what they said. A few students were not aware that they were in French.

Finally, if we are fortunate to get funding next year, I would like to encourage a few more neighboring schools to attend the performance. The students have suggested that after several years of Cajun music, African drumming, African dancing, and Tahitian dancing, we could use a bit of mainland French culture, so I am trying to contact a French singer for next year.

I would like to thank the Hinsdale South administration, faculty, and staff, the Darien city council, the AATF, the HSHS Foundation, my colleague Isabelle Menke, and especially our students, without whom none of this would happen.

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