

Community-Based Program French Heritage Language Program

Background Information

Institution: French Heritage Language Program

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Type of institution: Community-Based Program

Languages/dialects taught: French

Courses: Grades 9 – 12

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: This program is a joint initiative of the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the US, and the Alfred & Jane Ross Foundation. It is currently open in 6 international public high schools in the Internationals Network for Public Schools in New York (elective classes meet 2 to 3 hours a week, serving approximately 110 students).

The French Heritage Language Program is designed to support and enrich the teaching and learning of the French language and the French-speaking cultures

for newly immigrated students of Francophone background enrolled in U.S. public schools. The primary objectives of the program are to help students develop proficiency in French and maintain a connection to their respective cultures and identities, while also increasing their opportunities for success in their new environment. Specifically, preparation for official language tests such as SAT II French (and, from Fall 2008, AP French) is a key component of this program. More generally, as immigrants living in the United States with familial and cultural networks in Africa, the Caribbean and Europe, the ability to master both high-level English and French will equip our students to better negotiate themselves to the realities of the contemporary world.

The French Heritage Language Program also offers yearly intensive summer camps that are becoming more and more popular within the communities of French Heritage.

Program goals: Through university partnerships, the program hopes to contribute to scholarly research in the field of heritage language learning in the United States and France, as well as other countries. As a pilot program, it is a place for pedagogical and methodological exploration, and a way to build new partnerships. We also aim at providing teachers with the adapted teaching resources they need and training workshops.

Type of program: After-school or daytime elective program; intensive summer camps.

Program origin: The program was funded in 2005 with the help of foundation support and fund-raising events.

Parents' expectations for the program: The parents expect the program to enable their children to develop their French skills while integrating in the American environment through their enrollment at an international high school.

Instructors' and administration's expectations for the program: We are striving to establish the presence of the Francophone in New York City. Additionally, the staff seeks to improve the francophone student population's mastery of French, maintain links between the students and their cultures, involve the heritage communities, and contribute to research on heritage languages and the creation of adapted teaching resources.

Students

Students: First generation immigrants: 100%

Countries of origin: Haiti, Algeria, Congo, Gabon, Guinee, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Togo and France

Total student enrollment: 110

Students are received from: We are present in six international high schools in New York City. We work closely with the Internationals Network for Public Schools, which is currently developing models for global education and includes nine high schools for new immigrants. We are also on our way to open new programs in Miami and New Orleans (Fall 2008).

How the program identifies heritage speakers: The program considers a heritage speaker any student who originates from a country that is primarily French-speaking, a country where French is an official language, or French is the language that is used in the education system. Populations with a French-speaking background who settled long ago in the United States (French-Americans in Maine, Cajuns in Louisiana) are also considered potential heritage learners. In many cases, the heritage speaker already has some mastery of or exposure to the heritage language. Last year, the program's faculty evaluated individual proficiency levels through oral communication in class and written productions.

Percentage of students who complete the program: About 50 percent of the students completed the program in the first year, 80% in the second year.

Percentage of students who continue to study the heritage language after completing the program: 100 percent of the remaining students expressed a desire to continue studying French.

Possible reasons for student withdrawal: Overlap with other programs (usually sports, or tutoring).

Students' attitudes toward the language varieties they speak: The African students are very enthusiastic about learning French, and their native dialects never interfere. However, the Haitian students show similar enthusiasm but are often more prone to switching from French to Creole in the classroom.

Instructors

Number of instructors in the program: 6

Languages in which instructors are proficient: The staff members are proficient in French, English, and Spanish. They are fluent in French and English, and they have achieved intermediate level in Spanish.

Credentials:

MA

- International Education

French as a foreign and second language

- Cultural development
- French literature

PhD

- International education

Professional development opportunities for instructors: Professional seminars, workshops, shadowing other teachers, and sharing experiences with colleagues

Professional development opportunities instructors need: Teachers need better strategies on relating the heritage class to other academic study.

Instruction

Total contact hours per week: The students receive two to three hours of instruction per week.

Student grouping: The students are grouped in multi-level classes.

English skills: The learning of French is positively influencing the students' acquisition of English.

Heritage language skills:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Cultural skills, teamwork

Levels of language proficiency reached by the end of the program: The students have developed more confidence at the end of the year and improved in all four language skills. However, since there are no examinations, the precise level of improvement hasn't been measured.

Culture

Aspects of culture taught:

- History
- Customs
- Traditions/beliefs
- Arts and crafts
- Songs
- Rhymes
- Social and cultural norms
- Cultural appropriateness

- Literature
- Other culture-related topics or activities: Francophone news (newspapers, TV)

Kind of student identity fostered by program: The program fosters a positive and confident student identity. We also stress the importance of respect and responsibility.

Methodologies

Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program:

- Differentiated learning to meet different students' backgrounds and needs
- Project-focused learning
- Heterogeneous & homogeneous groups
- Games

Materials

Textbooks: We do not use textbooks. All resources are created by the teachers.

Other materials used for instruction:

- As part of larger projects, one or two French and Francophone literature books are used during the year for reading comprehension, and as a foundation for oral and written expression. The studying of these books can also lead to inter-school reading and theatre contests.
- Subject related texts and pictures can be used as a basis for explanatory purposes, games, written productions, and art.
- Music and compositions are used for cultural purposes, oral comprehension and expression, and artistic creativity.
- Grammar and vocabulary exercises are used periodically. They are found in the books, "*Grammaire progressive du Français*" and "*Vocabulaire progressif du Français*". The students personally ask for these types of exercise

Technology used for instruction:

- Movies are used to illustrate issues on particular topics or to serve as a start point for a new project.
- The Internet is used for research for assigned projects or presentations. Additionally, the teacher can also use the web to find useful teaching materials, propose activities that include watching the news in French, or build a classroom blog.
- E-mails are used for convenient communication between the students and the teacher.
- The program's Web site is the best way to report on the program and its cultural events.

Assessment

Assessments used to evaluate students' progress:

- Student self-assessment instrument (European Portfolio)
- Teacher's observations
- Performance-based tasks or assessment
- Portfolios

Articulation

Connections: We work with the Internationals Network for Public Schools, the French Institute-Alliance Française, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie and New York University and City University of New York. We also partnered with Medgar Evers College Preparatory High School during the 2007 summer camp. In 2008, 150 participants in the summer camp are expected in 8 different partner schools.

How the program promotes parent involvement: The program tries to promote parent involvement through a newsletter sent from the schools three times a year. A few parents also participated as chaperones in the summer camps.

Opportunities for using the heritage language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program: The students often speak French at home or when they go back to their countries of origin. However, it is obvious that they tend to use English as their new primary language.

What the program has in place

Types of financial support the program receives:

- Home government
- Foundation
- We are now soliciting private funding.

Solicitation of funding: The staff members directly solicit funding for the program. The program receives useful contacts and expertise from foundations and the French Cultural Network.

Desired assistance or collaboration for program from other entities: We need more teachers to expand to other public schools. We would like to develop a collaborative effort with the Department of Education. Also, we seek ways to give yearly scholarships to our students.

System for graduating students and granting credit: The students receive certificates for attending the program. Furthermore, the French after-school program became an elective class and the students get elective credits from their school.

Students' academic performance: The program does not monitor overall academic achievement in school, but the teachers still get useful information through conversations with other teachers in the schools.

Research: We collaborate with universities, the Center for Applied Linguistics, the National Foreign Language Center and the National Heritage Language Resource Center. Since French heritage programs are not very numerous in the US, we like to utilize the resources from these major research centers. We hope to keep working with them to better identify the needs of French heritage populations in the US, and produce the resources the language teachers need. We also collaborate with these centers on conference presentations (NECTFL, ACTFL).

Special challenges

Challenges the program has experienced: Funding; integration of the French program into the schools' regular schedule.

Additional support desired: We would like to collaborate with the Center for Applied Linguistics and the National Foreign Language Center. Since French heritage programs are not very numerous in the US, we would like to utilize the resources from these major research centers.