

Advocacy Checklist for Teachers

Here is a checklist that can be used by teachers whose French program is in jeopardy and who want to work actively to save it.

1. Stay calm and recognize the value of what you are supporting!
You have a great product. Your “customers” (students, parents, and decision-makers) need to be sold on the value of the product!

2. Get the facts and analyze the situation.
Seek information about the situation from the appropriate supervisor. If more details are needed, follow proper lines of communication in your school district.
 - _____ Have a complete picture of the situation. How real is the threat?
How far along in the decision-making process is it?
 - _____ Determine who the decision-makers are. Are they Board members? Superintendent? Administration? Curriculum director? Department chairperson?
 - _____ Analyze your school’s mission statement to be able to express how the study of French is an integral part of the mission.
 - _____ Be prepared to show how your World Language Department’s mission statement is linked to your school’s mission.
 - _____ Find ways you can work with your colleagues to support endeavors to save the program.

3. Seek support and allies.
 - _____ Enlist the help of your colleagues:
 - _____ Department head
 - _____ Other world language colleagues
 - _____ General education colleagues
 - _____ World language teachers at other levels in your district/sender/feeder schools
 - _____ French programs at state and local colleges and universities
 - _____ Contact your area’s AATF chapter president. (Find out who that is at frenchteachers.org)
 - _____ Contact your teachers’ association or unit district representative.
 - _____ If feasible, inform your current and former students about the situation facing the program.
(Note: In some schools teachers are instructed by administrators not to share this information with current students)
 - _____ Contact parents who will rally other parents to work on behalf of your program.

- _____ Contact your state’s department of education or world language supervisor to get information about world language enrollments in your state.
- _____ Contact your local and state representatives asking for support.
4. Seek more information on how to deal with the situation.
- _____ Consult documentation in the [AATF French Advocacy Resource Bank](#) for background information and for strategies.
- _____ Contact teachers whose French program has faced a similar situation and who succeeded in preserving the program. (Ask what they did to prepare their case, what worked and what didn’t.)
Note: AATF chapter officers can help identify these schools
- _____ Consult the [AATF website](#) for promotional and advocacy brochures, documents, and articles.
- _____ Use the [AATF French Advocacy Resource Bank](#) to help you present your case to administrators, school board members, your Chamber of Commerce, etc. See “Advocacy” at [advocacy.frenchteachers.org/](#) and [AATF Advocacy K-12 First Responder Kit](#) at the [Advocacy Depot](#)
5. Determine your strategy.
- Decide what kind of arguments will be effective. Be prepared to address the following kinds of questions:
- _____ Financial:
- Are there special expenses attached to the French program?
 - Will keeping the program necessitate hiring a part-time teacher or offering health benefits?
 - Is it too costly to support an exchange program to Canada, France or another francophone country?
Be prepared to offer solutions such as fund-raising, support from merchants in the community, etc., to those monetary problems.
- _____ Philosophical:
- Does your program help the school carry out its mission statement?
 - Is cultural diversity an integral part of your program?
- _____ Student-oriented:
- What value does the French program bring to students? minorities? Spanish-speakers? “First Generation” students?
 - What do exchange programs do to enrich the academic and cultural experience of participating students?
 - How does having French studies in the curriculum help foster cultural diversity within the school?

_____ School-oriented:

- What does the study of French add to students' understanding of the world? (History? Sciences? Art? English language?)
- What does your program contribute to other disciplines?
- Why French, anyway, when the French are so anti-American?

6. Get to know your community and school district.

_____ Familiarize yourself with the community and district by using the School Report Card, school profile, school public relations newspaper sent to the community, alumni association, etc.

_____ Use the knowledge of veteran teachers.

_____ Be able to target your arguments to your particular community.

7. Make use of AATF Advocacy materials.

_____ Provide parents with AATF French Advocacy Resource Bank materials that offer SUPPORT and INFORMATION. [Find these materials at advocacy.frenchteachers.org.]

8. Encourage parents to contact the local press.

Help parents present a case to your community through local and regional media.

_____ Have them send letters of support that provide positive assessments of the French program, indicate how intercultural understanding has been instilled in their children, show how positive relationships have been developed between students in France (or other French-speaking countries) and their own children, and among students in your own high school.

_____ Write or suggest articles featuring both present and alumni students' achievements in college or the workplace thanks to the preparation provided by your program.

9. Use social media to manage and raise support

To communicate with members of your advocacy group and solicit support from people in your community and beyond, create a public space to publicize your cause.

_____ Launch a webpage, a blog, or social networking page.

10. Don't forget!

_____ Listen politely to critics.

_____ Resist replying with hostility to criticism.

_____ Offer information rather than opinions.

_____ Stress the advantages of studying French.

_____ Avoid criticism of the value of studying other languages.

_____ Network with colleagues, parents and former students.

- _____ Enlist the help of other French educators.
- _____ Stay hopeful and positive.

BONNE CHANCE et BON COURAGE!