

Advocacy Arguments and Letter Writing Models

You learn that a French program at a K-12 school or post-secondary institution is targeted for reduction or elimination. You decide to mount a coordinated response to the decision makers, but what message do you send? This document expands on an accompanying document, “Arguments to Frame an Advocacy Letter,” by providing models for the 15 arguments proposed.

The following information provides advice and suggests components of a letter that you, as an advocate, might use to organize a cogent argument to decision-makers. In addition, your letter about an endangered French program can be shared and coordinated with letters drafted by other allies and submitted to the media. Both individual letters and collaborative letters can be quite persuasive.

Following each argument below, you will see examples of how other advocates for French programs have expressed their opinions. You may find it helpful to formulate your own response to decision-makers by borrowing arguments and phrasing found in these models.

Additionally, in the Appendix you will find supplementary resources and suggestions to support your own arguments: links to the “AATF K-12 First-Responder Advocacy Kit,” economic data about your state and the country, references to articles to support the benefits of bilingualism, and examples of testimonials that can be solicited from your allies.

1. **Acknowledge the reason(s) for a decision to eliminate the French program and respectfully provide targeted counterarguments throughout the document.**

- I am reaching out to you in my capacity as _____ (role). It has come to my attention that the _____ High School French program is at risk of being phased out beginning next year and I would like to call on you to reconsider this course of action. While I realize that your district is facing budget constraints, the choice to remove French from your high school would have several lasting negative impacts.
- We are aware of the budget constraints put on school districts in our current educational environment; however, we equally see the importance and growing demand of an educated workforce that is globally competent and proficient in multiple languages. Our own _____ State Seal of Biliteracy, in fact, recognizes the importance of language and cultural competencies for our students. It is important that French and other languages be part of the 7th grade World Language Exploratory Program because of the value of being exposed to another language at an early age. Our students in the 7th grade program receive that exposure and can therefore make informed choices before beginning their further language studies.

- It is my understanding that the Middle School intends to eliminate the 7th grade exploratory language program to replace it with STEM courses. While I believe that STEM courses are important, I also believe that they should not replace language study. As an alum, I believe that coding and robotics courses are important, but not if they eliminate learning languages. The school should be responding to the needs of all of the district students: not all students have an interest in the STEM fields. Based on my experience of having chosen to study French in 7th grade, I will be very disappointed if the Middle School were to eliminate the exploratory language program.
- While I am quite aware of the dire financial situation in which the town and schools find themselves, cutting French will not save any money in the short or long term. Because of the already large enrollment of Spanish and Latin, additional teaching staff would need to be hired to accommodate the displaced French students who will still want to study a language. There will not be any savings in this regard.
- It is my understanding that this proposed change to the middle school world language program is due in part to a need to improve school-wide math scores on standardized tests. I would like to share some of my expertise with you as a former middle school teacher and a current faculty member and researcher focused on K-12 world language education. I would argue that cutting world languages is the last thing that your school should do if it wishes to improve its students' test scores and their overall cognitive capabilities. This argument is backed by decades of research.

Source (annotated bibliography):

<https://mn02226726.schoolwires.net/cms/lib/MN02226726/Centricity/Domain/172/FLAbib.pdf>.

- As president of the _____ Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), a national association which promotes the study of the French language and francophone cultures in American schools, I feel compelled to write to you regarding the recent news that _____ Public Schools is considering phasing out its French program. Please know that I highly respect the authority of any school administration, school committee, city, or town to take decisions that are in the best interest of its students. In addition, I do understand that the town is experiencing budgetary issues. However, many of your students deem world languages not simply an elective, but a requirement in order to be competitive in their college search and to realize their future professional and personal aspirations.
- It has come to my attention that _____ University is contemplating eliminating the French major. I would like to speak in opposition to this proposal. The combination of a language major with any major on campus is a tremendous advantage both in terms of personal enrichment but also as a career benefit. In today's global economy, knowing another language well allows an employee to be competitive, flexible, and effective. French is the only language, other than English, taught as a foreign or second language in every country in the world. In addition, it is the only other global language, beside English, used as an important language of communication,

education, and commerce in 88 states and governments of which 29 use French as an official language. French is spoken by 300 million people. French is also an official language of our most important trading partner, Canada.

Sources: <https://www.francophonie.org/> and <https://www.census.gov>

2. Remind decision-makers of the value, quality, and reputation of the French program (including faculty as well as students' learning experiences) and of the institution's mission. Identify what would be lost if the French program were to disappear.

- _____ School has one of the finest French programs in the state and cutting the World Language Exploratory Program will negatively affect it. The proposed cuts will also hurt the German and Spanish programs in your District.
- To reduce the current program (and suffer the negative consequences) is not in the best interests of the students, the community, or future employers of your graduates. Surely, there are other ways to improve math scores for some students rather than cutting extremely valuable programs that benefit all students. All students need a well-rounded, child-centered education, especially in middle school.
- Having worked with _____ (teacher) for many years on the leadership team for the local AATF Chapter _____, we know that _____ School's French program is an exemplary one, based on her students' excellent rankings on the National French Exam, the students' involvement in the community, and their continued success after graduation. Her dedication, passion, love of teaching and world language instruction moves us to write in support of her and the entire _____ School's World Language Program. Sometimes, school districts do not value the strong programs they have in place. It may take others to remind school board members of the quality of education they have in their school. We ask you to keep it strong for your students and for the future.
- My fear is that if the 7th Grade World Language Exploratory Program is replaced with STEM-related classes, opportunities for children to interact with ideas, influences, cultures, and people that are beyond their immediate will be stripped away. If anything, children in this country should start language-learning at the beginning of elementary school or even earlier, like children in France, Germany, Spain, etc. It is never too early to give children a head-start in language-learning. It would be a mistake to delay their language education by another year. Not all students, myself included, are interested in finding a career in STEM. Some of us want to study law, philosophy, English literature, theology, German history, Spanish, etc. To eliminate this world language exploratory program would signal to children who are interested in other languages and cultures that only STEM matters.

- While we are all painfully aware of the budget constraints which you are dealing with now, I would suggest that cutting the seventh-grade language program is not the answer. Losing a year of instruction will certainly impact the scores on the eighth grade Level One Proficiency Examination and the tenth grade Level Three Comprehensive Examination.
- The French teacher who is currently teaching all of the French classes in your school, is a well-known, respected member of our professional association, the American Association of Teachers of French. _____ (teacher) has, in fact, received the "Prix d'Excellence du Chapitre," the highest honor for excellence in teaching offered by this chapter. The recognition of this teacher's work by peers is a credit to your institution.
- The _____ World Language Department has a reputation for excellence throughout the state. You are to be commended for your outstanding faculty who participate in respected professional organizations such as Language Educators of _____, the State Association of Foreign Language Teachers and the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), and who have inspired countless teachers, myself included, through workshop presentations. Your students score consistently well on the AATF National French Contest and regularly win prizes in the _____ Culture Fair.
- Your district offers students the opportunity to earn the Global Education Achievement Certificate (GEAC), which requires study of world languages for four plus years in order to develop higher levels of proficiency. Students need to have advanced courses offered and they need to have excellent teachers. You have qualified, experienced, and dedicated educators now who strive to advance student learning, achievement, and success through the French language and culture. To reduce the program (and then suffer the consequences) is not in the best interests of the students, the community, or future employers.

Source: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/cal/pdf/globaled-certificate.pdf>

- Interest in studying French in our area remains high. _____ [neighboring school system] has a flourishing program, _____ Schools [another neighbor and rival] have so many French students they are planning to add a position in French for next school year, and the _____ program [another neighboring school] remains strong, to name a few. How does our school compare to neighboring schools?
- If _____ University plans to implement "international priorities," as its website promises, then it should not eliminate French, but strengthen it.
- I understand that _____ University has a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. Please note that the Phi Beta Kappa Membership's current national requirements state, "Candidates shall have demonstrated, by successful work in high school or college, or in the two together, a knowledge of a second or non-native language at least minimally appropriate for a liberal education. In no case shall this mean less than the completion

of the intermediate college level in a second, or non-native, language, or its equivalent.” Reducing options for students to take courses that help qualify them for Phi Beta Kappa runs counter to _____ University’s desire to attract and educate talented students. It also takes away from students the opportunity for national recognition of their academic excellence.

Source: <https://www.pbk.org/Requirements>

- We are currently facing a serious French teacher shortage, and replacements for retiring teachers will need to be trained.
- Giving students the ability to prepare for a teaching career at an advanced level or to obtain an M.A. degree in their discipline rather than a generic education degree provides a vital opportunity for your post-secondary institution to strengthen the quality of education in the state and to lead by example.
- I urge you to consider your decision carefully and to give weight to the many arguments in favor of retaining the French program which do not and cannot carry a monetary value but which should influence the thinking of a great university concerned with quality education and to reflect on the symbolism which such a decision would carry beyond your own campus.
- Eliminating the French program from your curriculum would deprive your students of being exposed to a language that enjoys a global status, and prevent them from receiving initial training for international careers.
- Adding _____ and _____ to the other languages that you offer in your school/college would represent an enrichment; but eliminating French would deprive your students of exploring a diversity of other cultures and preparing for international careers.

3. Highlight a personal connection to the school or institution, if appropriate, and affirm the advantages of studying French.

- I attended the _____ School District where my whole educational experience was outstanding. I graduated from _____ School in 2011. I am now an attorney in Chicago where I practice immigration law and utilize my French language skills on a regular basis, skills that I first acquired as a student at _____ Middle School. To provide you with some background, I went to college for international relations and French and then went on to law school. Through my language experiences, I have had the opportunity to have prestigious internships and participate in a visit to the United Nations.
- I have just been informed that your institution was considering the elimination of the French program at all levels (BA, MA, and PhD). As Past President of the American Association of Teachers of French, I received this news with great concern. In

addition, I am an alumna of _____, where I received an MA in French in _____ (year). As you can imagine, I am quite distraught about this situation.

- As members of the _____ (state foreign language teachers' association) and of the AATF chapter of _____, we are aware that _____ High School has an outstanding French program. The teaching of the French language and culture supports and enhances our state's current educational goals of preparing students to be college, career, and military ready. A reduction in the teacher position will only jeopardize a vital program. Having worked with _____ and _____ (teachers) for the past _____ years, we know that they do not take lightly their roles in the classroom and in the school community. Their dedication, passion, and love for teaching are a huge asset to the _____ School District.

4. **Point out that learning French improves communication skills in English.**

- A very large percentage of the words in English and French have a common and easily identified source. So, while many university-bound students, encouraged by their parents and guidance counselors, assume that Latin will improve their vocabulary in English for the purposes of standardized tests (SAT/ACT/GRE/LSAT), the richest source of learned (academic) vocabulary in English actually derives not directly from Latin, but from French. Thus, the classical word roots of Latin can be acquired by the English-speaking student via French, a living language!

Source: Bullock, Barbara. "The Ease and Challenges for an English Speaker Learning French." AATF French Advocacy Resource Bank.

<http://advocacy.frenchteachers.org/academic-essays/>.

- Studying French enriches the English vocabulary of the anglophone student in immeasurable ways and in many domains that are part and parcel of everyday life. The legal and administrative vocabulary of English is stocked with French words: *people, govern, conference, council, contract, guarantee, crime, treason, and felony*. The field of architecture abounds with French terms: *mason, carpenter, scaffold, choir, chapel, and belfry*. Household terms were transported directly from French: *table, chair, cushion, chimney, laundry, garden, and arbor, and specially into the kitchen: dinner, supper, dessert, flavor, sausage, pastry, tart, pork, mince, purée, sauté, butter, mushroom, veal, beef, bacon, and mutton*.

Source: Bullock, Barbara. "The Ease and Challenges for an English Speaker Learning French." AATF French Advocacy Resource Bank.

<http://advocacy.frenchteachers.org/academic-essays/>.

- From the standpoint of linguistics, learning French can help many students better understand the English language and enhance their vocabulary since so many French words have been adopted by the English language from the time, following the Norman Conquest of 1066, when French became the language of government and the law in England.

- Learning French has been shown to help American students better understand, write, and speak the English language. Headlines show that this point is critical since incoming freshmen to college frequently lack good reading and writing proficiency in English. How can French help overcome this deficiency? Between 30% and 50% of English vocabulary derive from French. Students studying French are quickly able to transfer the similarities into their English writing and excel on standardized tests. In addition, they can transfer critical and creative thinking and problem-solving skills gained from their French studies, to other subjects, like math and science.
- English speakers have a clear advantage in learning the vocabulary of French relative to any other foreign language. A conservative estimate holds that one-third of the vocabulary of English is derived from French.

5. Cite research to support foreign language study and reference the cognitive, social-emotional, and cultural benefits of learning French.

- Most importantly, studying world languages has been shown in research to correlate with higher standardized test scores, including in math and reading. Here is one of many studies that offer this evidence:

Taylor and Lafayette (2010) compared students who had 30 minutes of world language instruction per day with those who had not, across Grades 3, 4, and 5, in Louisiana. They examined the student test scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century. The authors demonstrated that, for each additional year of world language instruction and controlling for other factors, the world language students significantly outperformed their non-world language counterparts at every level. Similar positive findings in the research connect world language study with accelerated brain development (Stein et al., 2012; Martensson et al., 2012). World language study has been shown to give student significant cultural experiences (Lee, Therriault, & Linderholm, 2012), and to help them to develop intercultural competence (Cooper et al., 2008), both of which relate closely to cognitive benefits and higher-order thinking development. Exposure to other cultures and diverse perspectives on the world offers students a chance to develop their critical thinking skills. We know that studying world languages helps all students – the evidence in the research is overwhelming.

- There is a widespread perception among high school and college students that French is difficult to learn compared to other languages commonly taught in the United States. However, the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center regards French as one of its Category 1 languages. [Category I language (French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish)] This means that it is among the languages that require the least number of instructional hours in order for an English speaker, achieving only the minimal required score on the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) test, to

reach a high level of speaking proficiency. (*The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center Catalog*)

- The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center and Foreign Service Institute have established the following classification of languages according to their level of difficulty for English-speaking learners to reach a high level of speaking proficiency:
 - a. Category I level of difficulty: Languages closely related to English, e.g., French, Spanish, Italian, and Swedish
 - b. Category II level of difficulty: Languages similar to English, e.g., German.
 - c. Category III level of difficulty: Languages with linguistic and/or cultural differences from English, e.g., Greek, Farsi, Pashto-Afghan, Russian, Serbian/Croatian, and Vietnamese
 - d. Category IV level of difficulty: Languages with significant linguistic and/or cultural differences from English, e.g., Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean

At the DLI, French, along with other Romance languages, requires from 600-750 hours of intensive instruction in order for an English speaker to reach “Professional Working Proficiency.” By contrast, it takes approximately 2,200 hours of instruction for them to reach that same proficiency in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese or Korean. This means that American students have a high probability of becoming proficient in French within a reasonable period of time, thus being able to be operational in the global economy.

Sources: <https://effectivelanguagelearning.com/language-guide/language-difficulty/>
 Bullock, Barbara. “The Ease and Challenges for an English Speaker Learning French.” *AATF French Advocacy Resource Bank*. <http://advocacy.frenchteachers.org/academic-essays/>.

- While I believe that STEM courses are important, I also believe that they should not replace language courses. As I’m sure you are all aware, middle school is a hard time for students and their development. Finding a comfortable academic outlet can make middle school a more bearable time. For me, excelling in and getting exposed to all the languages the middle school had to offer was a great outlet. Through this exploratory language program, I found that I loved French and was good at it. As a student who struggled in math and science courses, language for me was a place where I found my niche.
- Being able to study French in middle school led me to Madame _____, who was a teacher that made a major impact on me in high school. The language teachers are passionate about their subject and that’s not something you find in every teacher.
- The language program also provides students with a well-rounded education to learn about other cultures and languages besides the United States and English. We see that more and more aspects of our lives are intertwined globally. Having an understanding of languages and cultures is crucial; the younger this can start, the more beneficial it will be.

- The 7th Grade World Language Exploratory Program allowed me to start building my foundation for French, which I've continued to study in middle school, high school, and college. Foreign language classes helped me improve as a reader, speaker, listener, and writer in English, as well as take advantage of travel opportunities given to me.

(See additional resources in the Appendix.)

6. Assert the right of all students to have a choice among the world languages they will be able to study. Insist that French be one of those choices.

- If _____ High School were to discontinue offering classes in French, it would no longer have a WORLD Languages Department but rather a single-language department that could not claim to prepare its students to be global citizens.
- Giving students a choice is key. Students have varied reasons for choosing the language they wish to study, from family history to their interest in a given culture—its music, its art, its popular culture—to their own or family travel experiences. Importantly, students tend to do better in classes that they have chosen themselves. When we retain real curricular choices for our students, we give them more opportunities to succeed.
- The 7th Grade World Language Exploratory Program introduced me to the beautiful language of French. Throughout high school, I would go on to take five French classes, meet the love of my life whom I married several years later, gain an appreciation for French people and their culture, and strengthen my resolve as a virtue-seeking person, all because of that seed planted in my 7th grade French class, a seed that would grow full bloom in high school and continue even into college (I took a few French classes and a few Greek classes in college as well.).
- _____ has an excellent summer study abroad program, organized by Dr. _____, which always includes colleagues from other departments. This type of program represents a wonderful opportunity for students from various disciplines, and it is the kind of experience that will leave its mark on them. Robbing students of this opportunity would really be a shame.
- At a liberal arts institution, a commitment to a variety of language options expands students' knowledge of the world and extends the reach of the university through its alumni.

7. Defend the right of Spanish-speaking students to expand their linguistic and cross-cultural skills by learning French.

- If French were abandoned and Spanish were the only world language taught here at _____ High School, what would happen to the students who already speak Spanish as part of their heritage? Do we not want them to experience linguistic and cultural diversity? I would suggest that by not offering them the opportunity to learn another world language in addition to their own, we are short-changing their education.
- The grammar across Romance languages, like French and Spanish, is fairly constant; the basic vocabularies of the languages are similar; and the gender of noun cognates is, in most cases, identical across these languages. These similarities across the Romance languages also confer advantages on Hispanophones (Spanish speakers) who, at the university level, often choose to study French for their foreign language requirement. Such students tend to advance in proficiency in French very quickly.
- Spanish speakers have an advantage in studying French. Much of the vocabulary is similar to that in French, thus making acquisition of another Romance language easier.
- The official languages of many governmental accords and agencies, like the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and the United Nations Security Council, include English, French and Spanish. It is critical that we help students develop trilingual competence in order to compete with our multilingual competitors globally. Hispanophone students can take advantage of the resemblances between these sister languages and find opportunities to use all three languages in careers.
- Spanish speakers have the advantage of making enriching connections to more than just English by learning French. My PhD dissertation is on the poetry of Jorge Guillén who himself was exiled to the U.S. during the Spanish Civil War. As I research his influences, I see his enormous debt to the French symbolist poets, to Mallarmé and Valéry. It is with special delight that I read the beautiful opening lines of Valéry's poem, "Le cimetière marin" in French: "*Ce toit tranquille, où marchent des colombes, / Entre les pins palpite, entre les tombes; / Midi le juste y compose les feux / La mer, la mer, toujours recommence...*" and then return to the radiant poetry of Guillén's collection, *Cantico*. How might my understanding of this poetry be impoverished without the gift of trilingualism to be able to see this bond?

8. Provide examples showing French as an asset in launching a career or securing a job.

- Finding French actually got me a job in college. I work for the University of _____, Division of World Languages, which is an academic office that oversees all the

languages taught at the university. Having language experience from middle school and high school helped me to get this job.

- If I had not acquired French skills, I might never have realized I wanted to do immigration or international law, might not have majored in French in college, and would not be working now as an attorney.
- We wish to see many more incoming students at my university who already have French and francophone language and culture competencies. Such competencies can expose students to career opportunities in internationally oriented fields. We expanded our program to include Francophone Studies to give the opportunity to our students to be able to work in or with the new growing economies of Francophone Africa. A knowledge of francophone cultures will definitely broaden their employment opportunities. Not to be forgotten is the number of francophone heritage speakers in _____ (state). At _____ University, for example, we have students from Haiti, Senegal, Martinique, Togo, and Guadeloupe, who still speak French or Creole at home.
- Fluency in French is a useful skill. Graduates who have studied French get jobs using their language skills. I personally can name recent _____ University grads who use French in their jobs today: Carrie in international economic development, Barrett in the food industry, David in corporate sales, Max and Sam in telecommunications, Jenny in church work. All got their jobs because they had French in high school and continued their studies in college.
- As French teachers, we know that, of our students,
 - some will study abroad (I did, many of my colleagues did, and many of my former students did. Two of them are right now finishing up a year of teaching English in France.)
 - some will work at the U.N. (My student teacher did.)
 - some will work for the Department of State (One of my colleague's former students at _____ State University works in that branch of the government today.)
 - some will work at UNESCO in Paris (A former student of a teacher who taught at a nearby suburban high school has done just that.)
 - some will work at the Quebec Government Office, the Canadian Consulate and the French Consulate here in _____ (as several Americans I have known do today).
- Employers stress that they can offer their employees training in specific tasks, but what they really want in college graduates is people who can work with others who come from diverse backgrounds, and who can see issues from more than one point of view.
- As educators, it is important for us to consider the ever-increasing need for global citizens in the workplace. Your local state university, only a short ride from _____ High School, is a leader in dual immersion programs involving French with initiatives such as the International Engineering, Business, Textiles and Marketing programs. As

the United States and France are major established business partners, students with a strong background in French are valuable and in high demand.

- Nonetheless, many of our students, we realize, will not use French in the jobs they go to every day. Nor will most of their friends studying Spanish or Chinese use those languages in their careers. But we also know that employers regularly tell us that they want employees who can work on a team with people who are different from them, who understand and accept cultural differences: how people think and react to the world around them. Through studying French, students acquire those skills.
- The language enterprise represents a multi-billion-dollar segment of the US economy, and the need for translators, interpreters, and professionals qualified to conduct business in French is ever increasing.
- Many, if not all, of _____ University's French majors are double majors, choosing to study business, engineering, political science, and many other disciplines along with French. And we know that the skills that our graduates acquire in their French courses are in demand from employers: adaptability, collaboration, and global/intercultural fluency. These skills complement what French students learn in their other major program, making them more attractive candidates for today's and tomorrow's jobs. As one _____ University graduate said, having a French major gave him a leg up when interviewing for his job with a business services company.

Source: <https://learning.linkedin.com/blog/learning-thought-leadership/most-in-demand-skills-2020>
<https://www.naceweb.org/uploadedfiles/pages/knowledge/articles/career-readiness-fact-sheet.pdf>

9. **Emphasize the world-wide reach of French and the diversity of French-speaking populations.**

- Learning French allows students to encounter a language that is spoken around the world, for French is the only language except English spoken on all five continents. It is the official language of 28 countries. After English, French is the second-most commonly taught foreign language around the world. French, with English, is the official working language of top international organizations including the United Nations, the International Red Cross, and the International Olympic Committee. Americans can visit French-speaking areas as far from our region as Tahiti or Senegal, or as close as the province of Quebec, just several hours by car.
- The French language, not just the language of continental France, is an important international language spoken in over 50 countries around the world and is the only language along with English to be used culturally and commercially on all five continents. In this age of globalization, foreign language proficiency and cultural

competency—sensitivity, tolerance, and diversity—are indeed important skills for our state’s domestic and international operations.

- One of the goals of world language education is to instill an understanding of how to communicate appropriately and effectively with others within multicultural situations at home and abroad. Because French is spoken on five continents, students can readily encounter a variety of cultures in which they can use French.
- Knowledge of French can be advantageous to young Americans joining the workforce because French is spoken all over the world, in independent countries and in territories which are part of the French Republic. In addition to the increased verbal and written communication skills that come with learning and using words, students acquire an openness to diversity and develop cultural competencies, which stay with them all their lives. It is this openness to diversity and to the "other" that employers are seeking.
- In addition to providing proven career benefits and economic advantages, multilingualism plays an important role both in developing a global citizenship mindset and in effectively navigating our increasingly multilingual society.
- According to *Bloomberg Rankings*, French is considered the most useful language after English and Mandarin Chinese for conducting international business. The ranking scored languages according to 12 factors, such as the number of speakers, number of countries where the language is official, along with those nations’ populations, financial power, educational and literacy rates, and related measures.

Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pascalemanuelgobry/2014/03/21/want-to-know-the-language-of-the-future-the-data-suggests-it-could-be-french/#4165fa986d58>

- French was projected by Natixis Investment Bank in a 2014 study to be the most commonly spoken world language by 2050 because of the population growth in Sub-Saharan Africa, estimated to grow to 750 million. This suggests that employment among American graduates needing linguistic and cultural competency will only increase in the years to come.

Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pascalemanuelgobry/2014/03/21/want-to-know-the-language-of-the-future-the-data-suggests-it-could-be-french/#3d3771d66d58>

- Today, the choice to speak French is not solely a cultural and intellectual undertaking that connects us to our past. According to the most recent demographic studies conducted by the UN and by the International Organization of la Francophonie, a projected rise in population in Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of French speakers continues to increase. From 3% of the world population in 2010, the French speakers will represent 8% in 2050 with more than 900 million people. French will become the most widely spoken first-language by 2050, second only to English in the business world. Many investors have already begun to recognize the potential for French-speaking African nations to rise to prominence in the international marketplace. To

learn French today is to prepare for the future.

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47790128>

- _____ High School undoubtedly seeks to educate students for the future, and thus I can understand the common perception that French is a language of the past. Most people associate the French language only with France, and if indeed French were only spoken in France, economically and geo-politically speaking, French would indeed be a language of the past. The reality of the French language is just the opposite. French is *the* language of the future because it is growing exponentially outside of France. Consequently, it would surely be doing service to high school students around the country to make them aware of this reality.
- We want Spanish students to help our country build cultural and economic bridges to Spain and South America. We want Chinese students to help build cultural and economic bridges to China. And we want French students to help build cultural and economic bridges to Canada, Western Europe, North Africa, West Africa, French Guyana and islands in the Caribbean Sea and the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The world is wide, and the world is diverse. We need our students to have those cultural competencies that come from accessing culture through the language of another people.
- _____ University has developed a rich series of intercultural experiences for its students of French. In specialized study-abroad programs in France and Quebec, _____ University students step outside their comfort zone for a full semester or year of immersion in another culture and language, developing their ability to function interculturally with sensitivity and flexibility. And in both France and Quebec, students encounter multicultural societies different from those found in the United States, which can enrich their understanding of their own country and the world.

10. Connect the use of French to business and world trade. Cite information on the economic impact of French-speaking countries on your state or region.

- We are not always aware of how crucial the business ties are between French-speaking countries and the US — and our state. The French-speaking province of Quebec alone is the United States' 10th largest trading partner. In fact, Canada as a whole (where French is one of the two official languages) is by far the United States' largest trading partner.
- The United States and Canada, officially bilingual in French and English, enjoy the world's most comprehensive trading relationship, which supports millions of jobs in each country. The United States and Canada traded goods and services worth \$725 billion in 2019 – nearly \$2 billion per day.

Source: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-canada/>

- France itself has always been an important partner in US trade. In 2019, France was the sixth-largest business investor into the US, and French companies employed over 700,000 people in the US.

Source: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-canada/>

- What about our state? French-speaking countries are crucial trading partners for our state. More than 175,000 jobs in Indiana depend upon overall trade with Canada. Indiana's largest market for export in 2018 was Canada. France, in turn, was the seventh-largest export market for Indiana in 2018, so together, exports to these French-speaking countries totaled nearly 45% of Indiana's exports. Switzerland provided over 13,000 jobs for Indiana's workers in 2018 (French is one of four official languages in Switzerland.). So, clearly, offering our town's students the opportunity to learn the language of these important business partners prepares them for careers in international business.

Source: <https://www.statista.com/chart/14236/how-many-us-jobs-depend-on-trade-with-canada/>

<https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/state/data/in.html>

<http://www.iedc.in.gov/materials/downloads>

- As early as 2011, the Rhode Island Language Summit brought together stakeholders from business, government, and education in Rhode Island in order to assess the present and future needs for language and cultural skills in our workforce as well as to formulate a strategic plan for language education in the state. As the preliminary report states:

Foreign language instruction in the Rhode Island public education system is currently not sufficient to meet the needs of business and government. Although a variety of world languages are offered, most districts typically do not teach language until high school. This late start means that our public institutions of higher education are forced to focus most of their energies on novice and intermediate level language skills.

Source:

https://www.thelanguageflagship.org/media/docs/roadmaps/rhode_island_language_roadmap.pdf

- Focusing on your state's economics specifically, French is still essential. Hundreds of companies from French-speaking countries have offices and establishments in _____, (state) providing hundreds of jobs to our residents. In 20____, foreign-controlled companies employed _____ workers in _____ (state). Major sources of foreign investment in _____ in 20____ were Canada, Switzerland, Belgium, and France.

Source: <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/highlights/toppartners.html>

https://frenchtreasuryintheus.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019-France-U.S.-economic_full-report.pdf

- If we consider New York State economics specifically, French is still essential. Indeed, the number one trading partner of the United States is Canada, and the number _____ trading partner of many states, including New York, is Quebec (whose official language is French). Here are the 20 _____ trade figures with French-speaking countries for New York:
 - Canada: \$ _____
 - Switzerland: \$ _____
 - France: \$ _____
 - Belgium: \$ _____
 - Total: \$ _____

Source: <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/state/data/ny.html>

11. Offer examples showing that studying French is an opportunity to understand the ties of history and cultural heritage between the United States (and your state or region) and France and other French-speaking people around the world.

- America’s cultural ties with France go very deep. Studying French helps American students learn about a tradition that inspired our Founding Fathers. Today, students can learn about cultures in Francophone countries around the globe, from Europe to Africa to the Caribbean and Asia. Learning French can deepen students’ encounter with cultural diversity in unique ways. Here in our county, historical ties with the French language date to French explorers such as Father Marquette and LaSalle, and to Quebec fur traders like Joseph Bailly and Jean-Baptiste de Sable.
- Beyond the practical, cultural, and possible economic benefits acquired from studying French, one should not forget the influence of the French-speaking world on our region. Following the trajectory of history from the American Revolutionary War to the Franco-Canadian migration of yesteryear, to the Franco-African, Franco-Caribbean, and Franco-Middle Eastern influences of today on our region, we can better understand who we are as Americans and citizens of the world.
- I wonder whether your school leaders are aware of the long, shared history that Rhode Island has with France and francophone Canada. When French Protestants were not welcome in France in the late 17th century, they came to Rhode Island and set up a community that is still called Frenchtown. In the 18th and 19th centuries, French speakers came from France and francophone Canada to work in the Rhode Island textile mills. French was the primary language in Woonsocket until relatively recently. Many young Rhode Islanders have grandparents who live in francophone Canada. Our growing francophone African population is, in fact, related to Rhode Island's history through the French language and francophone cultures.

- To do away with French studies would be not only a great shame, but also a dismissal of the state’s history and probably very bright future as one state that, due to its contemporary and historic French ties, is poised to benefit greatly from the increased number of French and francophone immigrant cultures.
- Furthermore, French, along with English, is an official language in Louisiana. This is evidenced by the fact that over ____% of the residents in your State are French speakers. Hammond, the very city where your institution is located, has an official French sister city in Jouard Ponchartrain, France.

Source: <https://statisticalatlas.com/state/Louisiana/Languages>

- There are ____ native French speakers in the state of ____ and nearly ____ million state residents who claim French, French Canadian or other francophone ancestries.

Source: <https://frenchlanguagek12.org/3318-speakers-french-united-states>
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=french%20ancestry&hidePreview=false&tid=ACSDT1Y2018.C04006&t=Ancestry&vintage=2018>

12. Articulate the advantages of studying French to connect students to music, literature, painting, architecture, photography, cuisine, philosophy, dance, history, cinema, and scientific discoveries and inventions of the French-speaking world.

- I wanted to take French because I loved French art and artists, and I have never regretted taking French. Mme ____ took students to France the summer after my sophomore year, and I actually got to go to the legendary art museums I had learned about, like the Louvre and the Musée d’Orsay. I got to see the Impressionist paintings that I had only seen on the computer. It was a completely different experience to see them in reality! I hope to keep studying art in college, and it’s thanks to Mme ____.
- As a French teacher at the secondary level for many years, I have seen how French study helps students expand their cultural horizons. When I overheard a student athlete not known for academic rigor commenting to the student sitting next to him in a box at the Lyric Opera, “This is cool,” I knew that French had opened a door to French culture for him and that he had walked right in. If it were not for French class, many of my students would have missed the opportunity to be amazed by mime, to try fencing, to meet *The Little Prince*, to witness the theater of the absurd, to gaze at original Impressionist paintings, and of course to make and eat French crêpes. I know that these cultural experiences, made possible by the study of French are useful and critical to the growth and development of my students. I would therefore respectfully suggest that continuing to offer French in your school is in the best interests of your students and your community.

- Even scientists can and do use French. My colleague _____ did a Ph.D. degree in physics and lived in France for three years as he carried out a post-doctoral research position at the CERN physics laboratory on the French-Swiss border. His knowledge of French, begun in high school and continued in college, was important both professionally and, of course, in everyday life living in a small town near the lab with his wife and family. His ability to communicate in the French language was key to a successful intercultural experience and left him better able to work with those of different cultures in his international physics experimental group now that he has returned to the United States.
- The connection to culture that occurs through the study of French is indisputable. We also know that the human need to experience a variety of cultural activities is undeniable. French classes are filled with examples of art, music, literature, drama, fashion, sport and cuisine. These are the same art, music, literature, drama, fashion, sport and cuisine that many Americans and people around the world pursue and enjoy. And yet there are those who would deny the usefulness of studying French. Is it not useful for students to attend a special performance of the opera *Carmen* after reading the libretto with their teacher, in French?

13. Affirm that high school French students have many opportunities at the post-secondary level to continue to increase their language proficiency, including through advanced courses, dual majors, teaching certification, study abroad, service learning, and internships.

- Aside from English, French is the second most commonly taught world language in U.S. colleges and universities, so chances are good that students will be able to continue their French courses in college, or to have their courses accepted as transfer credit if they choose a dual-credit option for their high school classes. With a solid foundation from _____ High School, they will be in a good position to maximize their skills and use French in a career, or simply to use their French skills in a quality college education, be it liberal arts or a professional program. Colleges look favorably on students who have chosen to challenge themselves with upper-level French courses in high school, so it's important to offer more than beginning French.
- Here at _____ University, we have one of the largest French programs in the country in terms of undergraduate majors. Our success comes from our knowledge that language study benefits all students no matter what their interests. We have the International Engineering Program, the International Business Program, the International Studies and Diplomacy Program, and other similar programs in which students major in a language and another discipline.
- My university offers dual degrees in French-Engineering, French-Pharmacy, French-Fashion, French-Business, and French-Economics and Political Science (and we are currently negotiating new partnerships in French-Biological Sciences). Graduates in all five of these programs have gone on to be very competitive in the job market

because they have been able to do professional study and internships in France, in French, in their fields of study. These students stand out from their peers because they have the emotional, intellectual, and cultural maturity that comes from up to one year of study in their profession in a foreign country. If our French alumni are doing so well, it is in large part because most of them took French in high school and came to _____ University with 4-5 years of French in high school.

- High-quality school systems throughout the US offer French as an option for their students for many reasons. Since French is a European language, students find they can reach a level of proficiency by the end of their high-school years that allows them to successfully interact with native speakers. And those students who continue to college find French programs readily available that will help them advance their skills.
- Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges lists many US institutions which offer programs in French or related to French. This catalogue clearly shows that French is considered not only as an important language, but also as an important discipline in college curricula nationwide.

Source: <https://www.petersons.com/>

- It would be a short-sighted decision to limit the potential of interested students to become global leaders in their field. This is exactly the effect if the major in French were eliminated or if students could no longer combine French with another major, such as education, psychology, the sciences, or the fine arts.
- I came to _____ as a theatre major. The language placement test administered to incoming freshmen allowed me to enroll immediately in upper-level French courses. I was able to move between _____ Theater and _____ Hall and combine my interests while actually obtaining two degrees. Had I not been able to pursue my study of French to the highest level, I would not have obtained the Fulbright nor gone on to the professional and personal rewards that I have received because of my knowledge of French.
- A large number of _____ students will probably decide to come to _____ University as it is the flagship university of the state of _____. As such, if they have taken 4-5 years of French, they will be able to do a dual degree in one of our very successful programs, and they will go on to land very good, well-paid jobs.
- I had an opportunity to study French in a small high school and then to study French at the collegiate level with opportunities for study abroad to build on my knowledge of the French language and to experience French culture first-hand. What would I have missed if I had not had those opportunities? I would not have experienced a six-week immersion program at a French camp for high school students, or summer study at Université Laval in Quebec living with a Quebecer couple, or a year to study in France and live with two French families as an undergraduate student. Upon my

return, I was awarded many additional hours of undergraduate credits because of proficiency attained during these studies. However, the enriching experiences that I accumulated have marked my professional and personal life in ways that cannot be measured numerically. Should not other students be able to dream about and also have these same opportunities?

14. Reference current or potential collaboration between K-12 and post-secondary French programs to show the network of support and resources linking local education institutions to each other.

- I would like to propose that _____ University's French program work directly with _____ High School to build an innovative pathway program to prepare _____ High School's French-language students to become bilingual professional leaders of the future. Once again, the university French program is sending into the workforce bilingual pharmacists, engineers, businesspeople, public policy makers, and fashion and jewelry designers, who all had the opportunity to do professional study and/or internships in French, in a French-speaking country. We would be very happy to ask our successful alumni to go to _____ High School to speak about their studies in French and how taking French in high school helped them achieve the success they are enjoying today.
- I would be glad to talk to you about launching French Pathways programs with your school district. These would build on the students' French studies at _____ High School and connect with our signature international programs. This is a great way to invigorate the high school programs and prepare students for the future.
- I would propose a one-year delay before making a decision on the future of the French program. It is important that we educate everyone on the reality of French in the world today. I would be very happy to participate in the dissemination of knowledge, and also to bring university students to _____ to talk about their experience with French. In addition, I would be very happy to contact French-student alums to ask them to share how learning French and doing professional study in a Francophone country enabled them to be more competitive in the job market. As we at _____ University have seen a number of times before, once students and parents see the value of French, the program grows by leaps and bounds. As I am sure you are already aware, it is much easier to help a solid program grow than introduce a new one.

15. Remind decision-makers that French study today focuses on effective communication (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and on developing skills of interculturality (the ability to communicate with those of other cultures with respect and cultural understanding). Consider that student experiences today in world language classes may be quite different from those encountered by decision-makers when they were students.

- The argument for retaining a French program is that an institution cannot claim to be preparing students to be global citizens if it doesn't offer them the opportunity to understand other cultures by accessing those cultures through the language. Those outside our profession often have a rather narrow definition of "culture" and are unlikely to know what is being discussed in world language classrooms. Is your board aware that social justice, immigration, or sustainability would be the subject matter in a French course and that it is often through readings and media resources in French that these issues are revealed and examined?
- Employers list the ability to work in diverse groups, along with global and intercultural fluency, as crucial skills for the workplace today. The study of French helps to develop both of these sets of skills. French study has been shown to enhance skills in intercultural competence, increasing students' cross-cultural awareness and skill in interpreting and analyzing other cultures and their own culture. And French provides a unique set of cultural encounters for students. In French classes at _____ High School, students engage with not just the culture of France, but the cultures of the places around the world where French is spoken, from Quebec to Senegal, from Madagascar to Vietnam, from Haiti to Switzerland. This engagement with other cultures makes students more able to work empathetically with people in diverse groups, an ability that is crucial in today's society, here in the U.S. or abroad.
- At a time when American students need to develop their intercultural skills and sensitivity, _____'s French program plays a unique and valuable role. Students learn not just about France but about the multiple countries where French is spoken, from Switzerland to Morocco to Congo to Haiti to Quebec. Together with opportunities to study in France and to interact with native speakers of French from our partner institutions in French-speaking countries, these classroom experiences help our students become more skilled and flexible intercultural communicators.
- Employers list the ability to work in diverse groups, along with global and intercultural fluency, as crucial skills for the workplace today. The study of French helps to develop both of these sets of skills. French study has been shown to enhance skills in intercultural competence, increasing students' cross-cultural awareness and skill in interpreting and analyzing other cultures and their own culture. And French provides a unique set of cultural encounters for students. In French classes at _____ High School, students engage with not just the culture of France, but the cultures of

the places around the world where French is spoken, from Quebec to Senegal, from Madagascar to Vietnam, from Haiti to Switzerland. This engagement with other cultures makes students more able to work empathetically with people in diverse groups, an ability that is crucial in today's society, here in the U.S. or abroad.

APPENDIX

1. Cite data to support your arguments

- **“AATF K-12 First-Responder Advocacy Kit,”**
 created by Tennessee Bob Peckham
<http://www.utm.edu/staff/globeg/responder/home.shtml>

<http://www.utm.edu/staff/globeg/responder/home3.shtml>
 Additional ideas, including state by state information

<http://www.utm.edu/staff/globeg/responder/home2.shtml>
 Francophone culture and economic ties by state
- **Number of French speakers around the world, number of countries where French is an official language, and other statistics about worldwide French-language presence**
Organisation internationale de la Francophonie
<http://observatoire.francophonie.org/qui-parle-francais-dans-le-monde/>
« Publié tous les quatre ans par l’Observatoire, [le rapport sur la langue française](#) dans le monde est un outil essentiel pour tous ceux qui s’intéressent à la situation précise du français sur la planète comme dans chaque pays. »
- **Number of French speakers in the US.**
Cultural Services, French Embassy in the United States
<https://frenchlanguagek12.org/3318-speakers-french-united-states>
- **Number of those in the US of French ancestry**
USA Census Bureau
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=french%20ancestry&hidePreview=false&tid=ACSDT1Y2018.C04006&t=Ancestry&vintage=2018>
- **Top USA trading partners, monthly statistics**
USA Census Bureau
<https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/highlights/toppartners.html>
- **USA Foreign Trade - State by 6-Digit HS Code (Harmonized System for classifying goods) and Top Countries**
USA Census Bureau
<https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/state/data/index.html>
 Tennessee Bob Peckham notes that this site can be handy in showing the influence of French-speakers on American business. Look at the "export" link under Illinois, for example, and check the column for 2019 on the bottom of the page. You will see that

30.3% of Illinois' 2019 export revenues (\$89.1 million) came from countries where French is an important official language. Every \$60,000 of those export revenues creates or supports one Illinois job.

- **Trade: USA – Canada**

Office of the United States Trade Representative

<https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/americas/canada>

- **Trade: USA – France**

Office of the United States Trade Representative

(France is considered here as part of the EU, but there is a breakout of some specific France statistics.)

<https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/europe-middle-east/europe/european-union>

French Treasury in the US

(Service économique de l’Ambassade de France aux Etats-Unis)

<https://frenchtreasuryintheus.org/en/home-page/>

<https://frenchtreasuryintheus.org/en/the-french-economic-footprint-in-the-u-s/>

Many other quick statistics about U.S.-France trade are on this latter page. (“The French Economic Footprint...”)

- **Trade: USA individual states – France**

French Treasury in the U.S.

(Service économique de l’Ambassade de France aux Etats-Unis)

<https://frenchtreasuryintheus.org/en/the-french-economic-footprint-in-the-u-s/>

https://frenchtreasuryintheus.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019-France-U.S.-economic_full-report.pdf

Includes information on the French-American relationship on trade, investment, jobs, innovation, aerospace, and communities in addition to state profiles.

- **Trade: USA – Quebec**

Quebec Delegations in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles and Silicon Valley, and Washington, D.C. (examples of websites below)

Quebec Trade Offices in Philadelphia and California’s Silicon Valley

Quebec Government Office in New York

<https://www.international.gouv.qc.ca/en/new-york>

Quebec Government Office in Chicago

<https://www.international.gouv.qc.ca/en/chicago>

- **Trade: Individual States – Canada**

Office of the U.S. Trade Representative

<https://ustr.gov/map/state-benefits/in> (example: Indiana)

Canada Trade Commissioner

<https://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/tcs-sdc/united-states-of-america-etats-unis-amerique/indiana.aspx?lang=eng>

globalEDGE (Michigan State University)

<https://globaledge.msu.edu/states/indiana/tradestats>

- **Number of French speakers in Canada / Quebec**

Statistics Canada

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dt-td/Rp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=110156&PRID=10&PTYPE=109445&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=888&Temporal=2016,2017&THEME=118&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=>

- **Canadian rule on product labeling languages**

Competition Bureau Canada

<https://www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/01248.html#Manda>

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3. Cite online articles supporting bilingualism

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4. **Request a collective letter from allies, like the local AATF chapter.**

- The leaders of the AATF of _____ strongly urge you to support the French program at _____ Middle School and High School, leaving all three teachers in place. Having worked with _____, _____ and _____ for the past 15+ years, we know their dedication, passion, and love for teaching are a huge asset to the _____ School District.

Sincerely, AATF of _____ Leadership Team
 _____, President _____, President-Elect _____, Treasurer

- We are writing to you on behalf of the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) of _____ Chapter. The AATF, founded in 1927, is the largest national association of French teachers in the world with 9,000 members. Our organization recently learned of the possible cut of the full-time French teacher and elimination of the French program in the _____ School District.

5. **Solicit testimonials from former and current students, parents, colleagues (perhaps before your French program is endangered).**

Parent

- My son’s activities in his high school French Club were viewed as positive achievements when he applied to highly selective colleges. As an architecture student at Washington University in St. Louis, my son spent six weeks traveling through Europe. Due to his fluency in French, he found opportunities to speak and understand French, as well as enjoy French cuisine, which he knew about from his high school studies.
- My daughter is a sophomore at Boston College and her favorite part of learning French in high school was to cook French recipes. This sparked her love of cooking and baking, and she is interested in attending French culinary school post-college and

eventually opening a pastry shop. I attribute my children's exposure to learning French and experiencing the culture as broadening their interests and giving them an appreciation for other cultures.

- Lucy, our youngest, was fortunate to be a part of the _____ French exchange program in her junior year of high school, which allowed her to travel to Lyon, France, for two weeks with M^{me} _____. The following year, those students from Lyon with whom our children had lived, traveled to Chicago to be part of the second half of the exchange, and they stayed in our homes, went to school with the American students and had the chance to learn about us, our culture, and city.

Students (current students and alumni)

- After college and law school, I was hired as a young attorney at a law firm concentrating its practice in workers' compensation. In one memorable case, I was assisting the senior partner in a hearing on behalf of a Haitian immigrant who had injured his back while working. The company was disputing the claim. At the hearing, a translator had misinterpreted a critical piece of testimony from our client. I interrupted the hearing, which required a bit of audacity, a trait not especially ingrained in me at the time. "That's not what the witness said, Your Honor!" I announced for the record, praying that I was right. The official translator (no doubt highly paid) was embarrassed when it became apparent that the testimony more closely mirrored the comments that I had understood. The witness provided further clarification on a critical point; the arbitrator ruled in favor of our client. Had I not studied French, a critical point (and possibly the case) would have been lost.
- I was given a wonderful opportunity to begin foreign language study while still in junior high school. Throughout high school, I continued learning French, taking a French Advanced Placement class my senior year. It was in French class that I not only learned a language but also about French art and literature. I was exposed to foreign language cinema, opera, and music. My French teacher was highly imaginative and inspired. She knew how to rope us teenagers into enthusiastically learning not only French irregular verbs, but also songs by popular French singers and Christmas carols. Through her teaching I read Victor Hugo and knew enough about the French Impressionist period to blow the socks off any fine arts aficionado.
- Learning French has equipped me with innumerable professional and personal opportunities. For my chosen career, I became a physical therapist. I did an internship near Cajun and Creole country and was able to put my patients at ease with simple language courtesies, which later turned into spirited French conversations. Now, living in the State of Maine, my opportunities to use French occur on a daily basis. I can watch French-Canadian television programs and listen to French radio. I sing "Oh, Canada" in French at college hockey games. I even have gone to contra dances, which are a version of the French country dancing of the Canadian Maritime Provinces.

- I have been fortunate to travel to France twice. I realized during my first visit that a map of Paris was burned into my mind by those early years of studying French. I was able to get around easily, converse with native speakers, and thoroughly enjoy my visit. I was invited into people's homes in Normandy along the D-day Beaches. I have worked with new immigrants from Vietnam, a former French colony, and have laughed with crazy college students from Belgium on the floor of the Grand Canyon. In addition, I have aided an African family from Senegal and participated in a Haitian Relief Project on behalf of my church. Some of my dearest friends were met through funny twists of speaking a foreign language.