Breakwater School
K-5 Foreign Languages (French) Curriculum Overview
April 6, 2006

Foreign Language classes are taught entirely in French for the first several years to familiarize students with proper intonation. The primary focus is on becoming comfortable with French as a spoken language by relying on young students' innate ability to mimic sounds, give short answers to questions, and build upon a basic but well rounded vocabulary base.

Kindergarten

Kindergarten students meet with the French specialist once a week. Activities build upon the children's natural curiosity about and ability to absorb language, as well as their growing desire for self expression. Students are encouraged to listen intently and respond appropriately in French or English within the repetitive context of games, songs, story time, and mini dialogues with animal puppets, and role playing games.

Vocabulary introduced in Kindergarten includes:

- numbers one to twenty
- colors
- animal names
- shapes and sizes
- describing people and their roles in a family and the work force
- naming different foods and the three meals
- naming objects found in the home
- naming clothing items
- common French greetings and action verbs

Students are also exposed to French culture through classic French literature such as Babar and The Red Balloon, and American classics such as Madeline. They sing French folk songs, look at French art, and taste French cuisine, and enact mini-dramas in which elements of French history are represented.

First and Second Grades

First and Second graders meet with the French specialist twice a week. Activities address the children's growing sense of self by focusing on activities that encourage their creative urge to play with language as a tool for self expression, and to mimic language that they find amusing or appealing. Students are encouraged to listen intently and respond appropriately in French within the repetitive context of games, songs, story time, and mini dialogues with animal puppets and role-playing games.

During these two years, we also focus on strengthening aural comprehension of a broader range of vocabulary. We continue to practice vocabulary introduced in Kindergarten, and add:

- numbers twenty-one to thirty
- animal behaviors
- naming more foods and objects found in the home
- identifying different parts of a city.

We encourage active participation in both group and independent activities so that students benefit from each other's creative contributions and styles of self expression. Students also explore aspects of the many French-speaking cultures through activities that engage their curiosity, including:

- watching movies
- fiction and nonfiction readings
- cooking and tasting a variety of cuisine
- drawing maps
- trying their hand at Impressionistic art such as Pointillism
- being exposed to more French classic children’s literature

They also sing and dramatize various French folk songs, and may also enact elements of French-speaking history or culture by acting out activities in the life of a castle, or by giving a fashion show.

Third and Fourth Grades

Third and Fourth graders meet with the French specialist for fifty minutes twice a week. Students are introduced to French as a written language through exposure to the written form of all activities, such as listening to stories, memorizing chants and poems, learning songs, and role playing in mini-dramas. Students work independently to learn lines in a drama by listening to a tape and following a written script. Activities build on their acquired skills, challenge them to absorb new language, and offer projects to develop self-expression in art, drama and music. The emphasis is on speaking and aural comprehension, and feeling safe to take risks. Listening and observation skills are encouraged. Students' vocabulary will increase through contextual repetition, and they will begin to not only form a solid foundation of French vocabulary as it repeats itself in stories, role playing, oral drills, songs and games, but also use that vocabulary in a variety of projects.

The vocabulary focus builds upon words to describe people both physically and by the role they play in the family or the work force, as well as knowing:

- the months, the days of the week and how to tell time
- articles of clothing
- animals
- action verbs
- prepositions of placement
- adjectives of size, color, and temperature
- common French greetings

We explore the culture, geography, and history of one or more French speaking countries by doing a variety of activities such as cooking, dramatization of traditional folktales and folksongs, having fashion shows, and trying our hand at making art in the style of indigenous artists. We may dedicate a whole semester to a more in depth study of Paris and the life of the city. Focus on other Francophone countries besides France might include Haiti, Western African countries, Laos, Quebec, or special areas in the United States such as New Orleans, or Lewiston/Auburn, Maine.

Fifth Grade

Fifth graders expand their vocabulary and continue their study of grammar. With an emphasis on conversation, we learn verb conjugation and use of prepositions and adjectives. Students practice reading skills and start taking notes and forming a vocabulary core on their own.

Our study of French culture, geography, general history and art continues, from ancient times to modern. We also study familiar words and expressions from Latin and other languages to see how they have influenced the English language, and have interactive field trips where the students participate fully with food and conversations.