

"The Teacher as Impresario: Getting Everyone Into the Act "

Co-Presenter Lorin Pritikin
Francis W. Parker School
Chicago IL 60614
July 2000

Collaboration with Non-Foreign Language (FL) Colleagues:

Introduction:

In my opinion, collaboration is the key to success for most undertakings in and out of the classroom. Before you plan a cultural event, it will be important to ask some critical questions. They include:

1. Who is my target audience—is it the school community or the wider community?
2. For what age group is the event appropriate (e.g. for Claudia Hommel's Cabaret, I made certain that the initial announcement stated that it was appropriate for middle school-aged children and older)?
3. How elaborate will the event be (e.g. will it be a performance only or will refreshments be provided as well)?
4. What are the projected costs in addition to the performers (e.g. decorations, refreshments, public relations, postage, etc.)?

Below I have listed the people with whom I collaborated and questions that helped make my first cultural event a success. I am fortunate to work in a JK-12 school and the possibilities exist to include a vast age range of students in the planning of the event. If you do not work in such a setting, you may want to consider joining forces with a middle or grade school in your district.

Music teachers:

1. Are there choral groups who could learn a French choral piece, such as a Charles Trenet song for the intermission?
2. Are there younger students who could learn a French song to add to the program?

Art Teachers:

1. Are there young and old students who could participate in a poster contest through their art classes? These posters are great for advertising the event or for serving as a cover for the program.

Drama Tech Teachers:

1. Are there students who can aid in the technical aspects of the event: lighting, sound, decoration? In our school, students enrolled in the Drama Tech program need to earn a certain number of hourly credits working at school-sponsored events. One way to entice them to volunteer for a cultural event is through their stomachs—make sure you let them know that they will be allowed complimentary refreshments!

Collaboration with Foreign Language Students:

1. Will students want to add French Club member to their résumé? All students participating in the event in some way should receive complimentary tickets.
2. Will some students need extra credit? Some FL teachers provide extra credit opportunities through foreign films and cultural events in the community. This is a perfect chance to give a student the chance to earn some extra credit without having to even leave the school!
3. Do you have students or parents with particular talent for decorating? Transforming a cafeteria, for example, into a performance space can be a challenge but students and others often have great ideas!

Collaboration with Parents:

1. Are there parents who can help with the logistics of set-up and public relations? It will be very difficult to take care of all of the details on your own because they are very time consuming! Parents can help with: placing notices in the school newsletters; picking up refreshments; photocopying announcements to be sent to school mailing list; donating resources, such as votive candles, empty wine bottles, table clothes, artistic talents; etc. for decorating the performance space.
2. Are there parents with personal business connections who could ask for donations for such things as: photocopying services; flowers; refreshments; decorations; etc.?

Collaboration with Local Businesses:

1. Are there local businesses with owners who speak the languages that are offered in your FL program or businesses with foreign names (e.g. Nonpareil Gift Shop, La Crêperie Restaurant) that would like to help promote multicultural events at your school? Donations can include gift certificates for door prizes; floral centerpieces; photocopied programs and banners; picturesque posters from cultural bureaus or travel agencies; and refreshments. All businesses donating goods or service receive an honorable mention in the program.

Conclusion.

There are many options for bringing cultural events to your schools. Possibilities include theatrical productions, musical reviews, or dance troupes. Planning a cultural event is one of the best ways to integrate the arts into a foreign language curriculum.

Remember that collaboration is the key to success. I assure you, you will need as much help as you can get. The most obvious, "built-in" resource is your students. However, don't forget about tapping into the help of parents, colleagues, and local businesses. You will be surprised, as I was, about how willing many people are to donate goods and services—but remember, you will need to ask if you are to receive!

Bonne chance!
