



AMERICAN SCHOOL  
OF PARIS

*founded 1946*

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## **French in the Lower School - ASP**

### **Program Overview**

#### **“Tu dois parler seulement en français”**

***“(...) ASP is an English speaking school where French is the language of the host country. We value the learning of additional languages and the development of mother tongue languages. Proficiency in additional languages aids the student in acquiring competencies in other curricular areas.” (ASP Language Philosophy Statement)***

***Lower School Team of French Teachers: Agnès Léonard, Laura Vescio, Emmanuelle Sellars, Véronique Baudin, Marianne Kennedy, Agnès Poudou, Jean Pierre Heussaff.***

French classes are taught daily EC- 3 to 5<sup>th</sup> grade through an in-house **Multi-Sensory Story Based Program**.

Four courses are offered to **non-native speakers** of French based on their proficiency levels: **Novice Low, Novice Mid, Novice High, and an Intermediate Low/Mid class** (levels are separated whenever possible).

**Heritage Track** (Francophone class): When numbers allow, students fluent in French are offered specific instruction aiming at developing cognitive and academic language proficiency (CALP, J. Cummins). Course contents vary, and are adapted to the childrens’ proficiency levels, especially in the areas of reading and writing.

## French as an additional language:

### Pedagogy

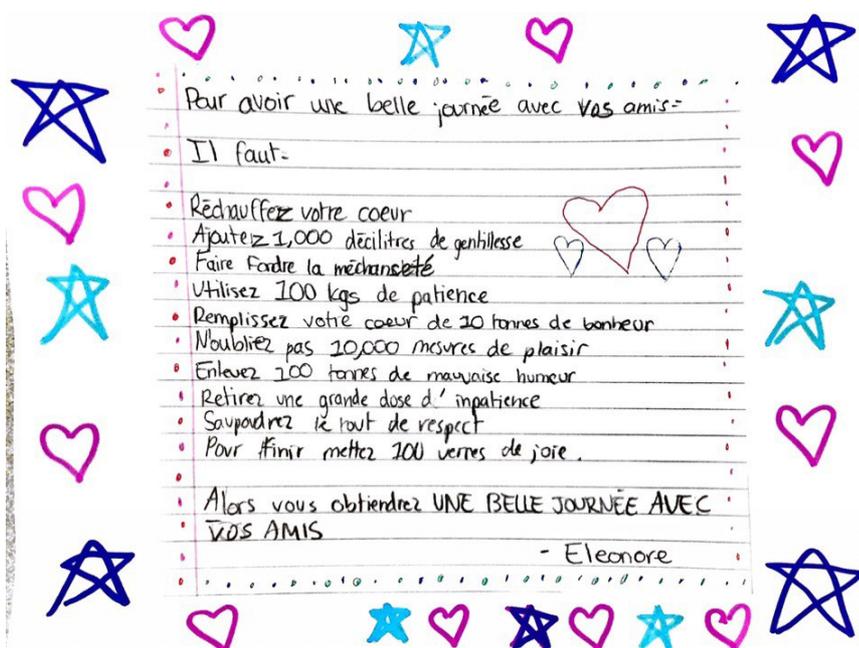
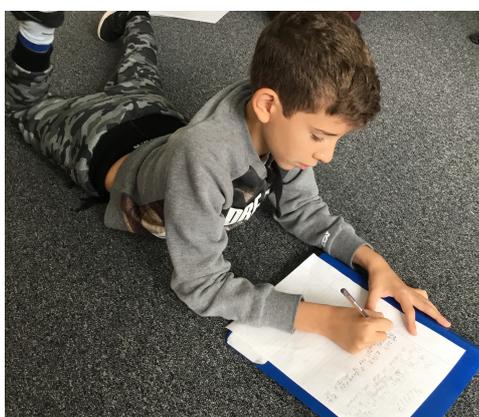
Our in-house **Multi Sensory Story-Based Program** in the Lower School has been influenced in its development by the **Natural Approach Theories of language acquisition (Terrel and Krashen)**, by **Communicative Approach Theories**, by **Jim Cummins Theories** on language acquisition, and by research supporting the **Accelerative Integrated Methodology (AIM)** (gesture technique that we use to teach high frequency words and structures in the first two years of instruction).

We believe that learning must take place in a supportive atmosphere as free of stress as possible, that allows students to internalize the language at their own pace, respecting each child's language ability. The progress of the students is monitored and assessed based, when applicable, on the K-12 ACTFL proficiency guidelines for language performance and proficiency.

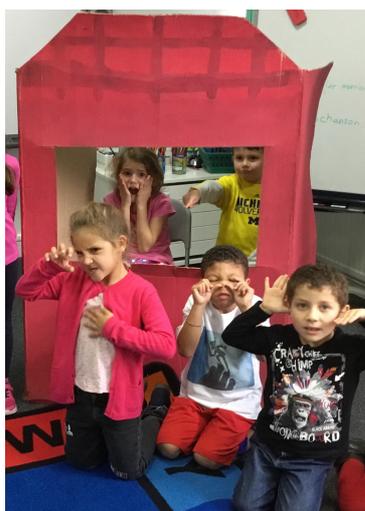
French is the sole language of instruction, and all the students regardless of their age, grade level, or proficiency level are expected to adhere to the "French only" rule in class.

All the courses aim at developing **Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational** skills (ACTFL - see reference page).

Courses for **Novice** (new to French, and early language production) and **Intermediate** speakers (becoming familiar, and becoming competent with the language) are built around material that has been specifically written for language acquisition, and/or around authentic documents (books, newspaper articles). It serves as a base for instruction, and as motivators for language emergence and development.



Stories from children’s literature, such as “Les Trois Petits Cochons”, or folktales for example, provide a familiar and easy-to-understand context to acquire language, to integrate high frequency words and language structures, and to develop interpersonal, interpretive and presentational skills. The teachers also rewrite stories to emphasize the use of high frequency vocabulary and grammatical structures.



The vocabulary and grammatical structures are always introduced in the context of the stories, and integrated by the students through the use of role playing, songs, puppets, corporal expression, games, etc.

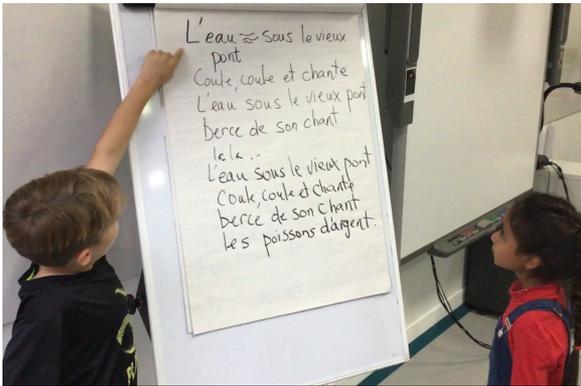
Our goal is to engage all the students, and to develop in them a positive attitude towards learning the language, and towards the French culture. We aim to create an atmosphere where students feel successful. Reading and writing activities are gradually incorporated into the program, however the main goal is to develop oral interpersonal communication skills, using meaningful language that can be re-used in a variety of contexts.



**The aim of the Novice level** is the acquisition of high frequency words and grammatical structures, essential to the building of basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS, J. Cummins). Vocabulary and structures are acquired through the gesture approach that we practice on a daily basis (AIM).

**At the Intermediate level**, learners work on developing more academic language (CALP, J. Cummins). Stories are also used to continue developing oral fluency and more reading and writing activities are gradually incorporated into the program.

We work on the stories unit by unit, or on video skits in 4th and 5th grade; we sing, dance, write, read, act, draw, paint, cook and play. Role playing is an important component of our approach. It draws on children's natural attraction to the imaginary, it provides gentle repetition, vocabulary clusters, and put the language in context. Not only does it help with pronunciation, with intonation, with internalizing language structures, and with fluency, but it also helps build self-confidence.



Apart from traditional cultural celebrations such as winter festivities, "La Galette des Rois", "Le Poisson d'avril", and/or "Mardi-Gras", we integrate social studies and art units of study whenever culturally and/or linguistically appropriate.

### **Technology Integration in the French class:**

We use the iPads in the classroom to document, showcase and assess students' learning. We do not use commercial apps geared towards learning a language, but apps that allow students and teachers to create content, in an audio-book format for example (story retelling, or story writing). It gives students more opportunities to play, experiment, and practice with the language; it takes them one step further in the language acquisition process, as students' work is shared with a real audience, and it fosters the development of communicative, collaborative, critical thinking, and creative skills.



Students stay with us an average of three years. Their language experience at ASP paves the way, however, a much longer exposure to the language is needed to make a claim to fluency. The great majority of our students demonstrates a positive attitude and participates actively and happily in the activities. We encourage our students to do their best to adhere to the French-only rule in class, and we strive for them to leave the Lower School with a positive and successful

language experience. We are pleased with the results, but we nonetheless endeavor to keep abreast of innovative ways of teaching languages, and we will continuously question and look for ways to improve our practice.



## WHAT WILL THE CHILDREN GET OUT OF THE FRENCH PROGRAM ?

The students in the Lower School French program will:

- Receive one period of daily instruction, taught exclusively in French by levels of language proficiency whenever appropriate or possible.
- Use a gesture technique at the Novice Low and Mid levels in order to express themselves from day one exclusively in French in the classroom (Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM)).
- Develop communicative proficiency through our in-house story-based program.
- Develop proficiency in the areas of reading and writing when developmentally appropriate, starting in 3rd grade.
- Be offered instruction that bridges over to other disciplines such as art, music and social studies when culturally and/or linguistically appropriate.

Examples of integrated units:

- o Study of monuments along the Seine River linked to 3rd grade Social Studies units of l'Île de la Cité.
- o The City of Garches shops and services linked to 2nd grade unit on communities.
- o Monet's life in Giverny, integrated 4<sup>th</sup> grade Art and Social studies.
- o Study of the statuary in the gardens of Versailles castle, linked to the Fifth grade unit on Greeks and Romans.
- Develop a positive attitude towards the French culture by drawing on the Paris area historical heritage and cultural scene to open their minds and fuel their imagination.
- Broaden and enrich their French experience through day and week-long fieldtrips in and out of Paris.
- Reflect on cultural differences to develop respect and acceptance for the French culture and other cultures in general.
- Build on intra-personal and interpersonal communication skills that are exemplified in other areas of learning: self-confidence, facing challenges, risk taking, creative thinking, cooperation and collaboration.

## HERITAGE TRACK –Grade 1-5

The Heritage Track (“Francophone”) is intended for fluent speakers of French, regardless of their background and ability in academic language proficiency.

The goals of the program are to consolidate, refine and enrich the language, and to reinforce connections with the French culture.

**Heritage Track** classes are offered starting in grade 1, *whenever numbers allow*, to students who speak French with native or near native fluency. All the students in this track have acquired “Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills” (BICS – James Cummins). However their “Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency” (CALPS – James Cummins) varies according to the intensity and length of exposure to more complex language, especially in the areas of reading, writing, and culture. Students can enter the Heritage track at anytime in grades 1-5, regardless of their *cognitive academic* language proficiency, given that they have mastered native- like basic interpersonal communication skills. Given the span of cognitive academic language proficiency levels, areas of focus have to be tailored every year to the ability of the students at each grade level, especially in the areas of reading and writing.

### Objective

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The program aims at developing: Communication Skills (oral, and written\*) Interpretive Skills (listening, and reading), and Presentational skills (oral, and written\*).

We aim to enrich the vocabulary, and develop an understanding of most common grammatical structures.

The following skills will also be emphasized: collaboration, creative thinking, and critical thinking.

### Communication skills

#### Oral :

Students in the Heritage track will develop skills to:

- Speak to an audience with relative ease and confidence using adequate vocabulary and accurate grammar structures,
- Contribute to group discussions with pertinent ideas and appropriate suggestions,
- Rephrase, summarize, retell, describe, argue, or defend an opinion,
- Express a point of view,

- Express agreement, disagreement, feelings and emotions using appropriate vocabulary and tone,
- Use communicative strategies (re-phrasing, paraphrasing, asking for clarification),
- Handle the above in the major time frames of present, past and future.

### **Writing skills\***

- Take notes during an oral presentation,
- Write a paragraph,
- Read, understand, answer questions, and summarize a text,
- Spell high frequency words correctly,
- Complete targeted grammar and spelling exercises independently or with little support.

### **Interpretive skills:**

#### **Listening:**

- Listen to understand varied topics of discussion
- Ask for clarification

#### **Reading\*:**

- Develop reading fluency using a variety of texts: newspaper articles, poems, fiction or non-fiction books
- Develop the habit of reading regularly in French for pleasure

### **Presentational skills:**

#### **Oral**

- Recite poems, and sing songs with expression
- Act out skits/plays with expression
- Present oral reports (book reports or topics of interest) using a variety of media

#### **Writing**

- Organize ideas to write a book report, or a presentation on a favorite or imposed topic,
- Write short texts (fiction, nonfiction, poetry) with correct language structures, acceptable spelling, and following punctuation rules.



*(\*when developmentally appropriate)*

## References:

BICS and CALPS Jim Cummins's theories on 2<sup>nd</sup> language acquisition

<http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/support/cummin.htm>



**The Natural Approach** Theory of language acquisition (Krashen and Terrell) asserts that languages are acquired, not learned, through a natural unconscious process. Thus a second language should be acquired in context, in a “natural way” similar to the way children learn their mother tongue.

[http://www2.vobs.at/ludescher/alternative%20methods/natural\\_approach.htm](http://www2.vobs.at/ludescher/alternative%20methods/natural_approach.htm)



**AIM:** Our multi sensory story based program uses the technique from the AIM method that combines auditory, visual, verbal and kinesthetic activities, and addresses all learning styles.

“AIM” stands for “Accelerative Integrated Method”. It originated in Canada (Wendy Maxwell, AIM Language Learning), and it is a multi-sensory story-based method similar to our approach. We use some of the stories from the method, and the brilliant gesture component of the program. High frequency words and structures have been associated to specific gestures which allow students to use the target language from day one. It helps put quickly into place the “French-only” rule.

<http://french.about.com/cs/teachingresources/a/aim.htm>



**ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012**

<http://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012>

