

American Association of Teachers of French

Rhode Island Chapter



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Dear Parents of _____,

As president of the Rhode Island 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 would like to take this opportunity in writing to tell you about the invaluable advantages of a strong foreign language program in **French** for your student(s) and the importance of **French studies** in the contemporary American classroom.

The French language, not only the language of continental France, is an **international language** spoken in over **40** countries around the world, and is the only language along with English to be used culturally and commercially on all five (5) continents. In fact, taking into account five linguistic factors (i.e., number of primary and secondary speakers, geographic distribution, international commerce, economic power, and social, cultural and literary prestige and influence), **French is rated number two as to the most influential world languages.** ♦ Also, a recent survey from **Bloomberg.com** shows the French is one of the top three businesses languages in the world (Spanish was number four). ♦♦ Finally, the **American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages 2008 Student Survey** revealed French as the most popular choice as to what language an American student would be most interested to study. ♦♦♦ With our world becoming evermore interdependent, the AATF believes that it is necessary for American students to continue to be exposed in their formative years to the language, history, and community that French studies bring.

For the first time since the 1960's, American students are engaging themselves at universities at a significant rate to study languages coupled with other majors. More and more universities are requiring two, if not three or four years of foreign language study as prerequisites for admission. At our own **University of Rhode Island**, foreign language study is at a rate of 71% of the student population, far exceeding the national average of 41%, with French as the most popular choice among URI undergraduates. In fact, URI's program in French and francophone studies is rated number two in the country.

Achieve **better test scores** with the help of one subject — **Français!** One reason is the fact that learning French will help students better understand and speak our own English language. Approximately 50% of modern-day English words trace their origins to French, so students can quickly learn French and correlate the language's many similarities to excel on standardized tests like the **SAT**. This rapid progress boosts a student's confidence and

improves his or her overall academic performance. French also enhances a **student's critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem solving skills**, which in turn sharpens their understanding of other subjects like math and science.◇◇◇◇

Even more important for the growth and development of our students, the French language is a vehicle of tremendous **history, culture, and commerce**, as it is spoken in over **40 countries** around the world. Let us give our students what can truly improve the quality of their life, so that they become both productive and cultured human beings.

It is understood that tomorrow's graduates must have the skills to function well in our **ever-interconnected world**. Learning French would be an obvious choice for graduates entering into the **world economy**.

If you would like to know more about the advantages of having students taking French as their foreign language elective, please visit the RI chapter website of the AATF: www.aatfri.com.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,



Michael Hébert
President

◇ Comrie (1998), Weber (1997), and the Summer Institute for Linguistics (SIL) 1999 Ethnologue Survey

◇◇ www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-08-30

◇◇◇ American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

◇◇◇◇ Embassy of France & AATF