



FRENCH TOPIC: CROSS CURRICULAR

différence semaine

Launch your French week with appropriate Gallic flair using these ideas from Helen Grootshues...



Has your school chosen French as its primary language? Whether you're just starting out, or further down the road, une semaine française can be a great way to fire up children's passion for language learning and their curiosity about the French language and culture.

There are lots of reasons for making space in the school calendar to run a French week. Not only does it give you the opportunity to explore aspects of French language and culture in more detail, but it also provides many exciting ways for children to learn together, cross-phase and even cross-school if you decide to collaborate with a local secondary. A French week is also a brilliant way to bring together the whole community – children and adults in the school, parents, governors, local authority advisers, local businesses, and the local press.

There are tons of exciting activities that you can organise for your French week. Here are a few ideas to help you get the whole school involved and to ensure that French is used both in and out of the classroom.

ACTIVITY ONE

Involve everyone

SPEAK FRENCH WHENEVER POSSIBLE AND MAKE SURE PARENTS AND ALL STAFF JOIN IN TOO!

Before the week starts, bring all school staff together for a French session where you learn some useful phrases, as well as possibly sampling some French cheese and wine. This is a great way of getting everyone on board.

It's very effective if, from the moment they arrive at school, children are greeted in French and see all adults having a go at using French. Hearing 'Voilà - bon appétit!' from the lunchtime staff will be a lovely surprise, and even more so if children are encouraged to order in French and to use 's'il vous plait' and 'merci' when speaking to adults and each other.

Your daily assemblies can be French-themed, with classes showcasing what they have been learning and with whole-school singing in French. You might like to invite a theatre group in for a special performance or workshop – Language consultant, Jan Lewandowski, suggests ten companies offering MFL workshops and performances on her website www.janlewandowski.co.uk.

Getting parents and friends of the school involved with a French international evening can also be a real highlight. Invite them for a celebration of language and culture and encourage parents to bring in dishes from French-speaking countries. Children can help to decorate the hall and also provide the entertainment - in French, of course!



ACTIVITY TWO

Take a virtual tour

GO SIGHT SEEING IN PARIS

Combine French with ICT and geography and visit France and other French-speaking countries around the world. Using Google Earth, you can now plan and record a virtual tour of, for example, Paris, taking children to places of interest. You might like children to plan their own tours of a city or country and present them to the class using simple language, e.g. *Voici la tour Eiffel, or Voici Bamako. Bamako est la capitale du Mali.*

You can also visit museums and art galleries – on the Musée du Louvre website (www.louvre.fr) you can go on a virtual tour of the museum, as well as find out about ticket prices and opening times.





ACTIVITY THREE

Play with language

SIMPLE GAMES FOR LEARNING FRENCH

A great way of ensuring children practice their language skills as much as possible is to teach them some fun games to play in French. If you are lucky enough to have a foreign language assistant you'll find that they are a fantastic source of authentic games, songs and rhymes. If you have French-speaking children and parents in the school, you can ask them to share their favourite past times with you. Here are a few ideas that children will enjoy:

■ Teach simple 'counting in' rhymes that children can use when choosing who will be 'it' for a game. A nice example is:

Am, stram, gram
Pic et pic et colégram
Bourre et bourre et ratatam
Am, stram, gram.

■ Skipping rhymes like this one are also great fun to teach and play with:

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,
Violette, Violette,
1,2,3,4,5,6,7,
Violette à bicyclette.

■ **Le facteur** (the postman). Children sit in a circle, with one child (**le facteur**) holding a handkerchief and walking around the outside of the circle, as children chant:

Le facteur n'est pas passé
Il ne passera jamais,
Lundi, mardi, mercredi, jeudi, vendredi,
samedi, dimanche.

On hearing the word 'dimanche', the **facteur** drops the handkerchief behind one of the other children. That child then jumps up and chases the **facteur** around the outside of the circle, trying to catch them before they reach the empty space. If the **facteur** is caught, he or she continues for the next round. If not, the child whose place in the circle has been taken becomes the postman.

Ask children to make up their own simple clapping or skipping rhymes with numbers, colours, days of the week, months or the alphabet.

You can find lots of other great ideas for games in the training zone at www.primarylanguages.org.uk/training_zone



ACTIVITY FOUR

Share stories

CREATE A FRENCH-INSPIRED READING CORNER

Turn your reading area into a corner of France for the week. Use red, white and blue drapes, pictures of France and cushions to make it cosy and create an eye-catching display of French picture books and comics to read. Put up a pinboard for 'J'adore...' review cards, so that children can recommend their favourite reads to their classmates. You might want to provide language prompts to help them (*parce que c'est marrant / intéressant / passionnant / effrayant* etc.).

Put a class set of finger puppets in the book corner for role-play work and set up a listening station with a collection of French stories and songs, with pictures or text for children to follow or sequence.

Organise a reading rota for the week, where older children visit younger classes to share their favourite French stories. I saw a lovely example of a Y6 class working with the Nursery on a joint drama project – why not do this with French? A joint Y6 / Nursery production of *La chenille qui fait des trous* (*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*) would be marvellous!

ACTIVITY SIX

Link with a partner school

COMBINE MFL WITH ICT

If you haven't already done so, why not set up a link with a school in France or another French-speaking country and use French week as a platform to launch the partnership? There are lots of ways of finding a partner school, and the Global Gateway has produced an excellent factsheet all about the best ways to link with French-speaking schools (see 'How to link in France' at www.globalgateway.org.uk).

French week can be a great opportunity to spend time on joint projects with your partner school. Have you thought about setting up a video-conferencing link with your partner school? Teaching each other songs, playing language games together and joint cookery masterclasses are some of the great things you can do (see www.primarylanguages.org.uk/training_zone for video examples of these projects).



ACTIVITY FIVE

Have a transition taster

LET Y7 RUN A CAFÉ

Set up a French café or market in the school hall, where classes come to visit and buy food speaking in French.

An event like this is also a wonderful way to collaborate with a local secondary school. Y7 pupils will really enjoy coming into the primary school to run a café or market in French for the children and it could also be part of a transition project if run in the summer term.