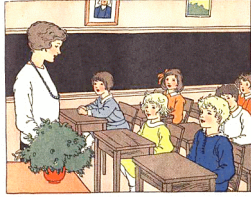


Sound Bites for Better Teaching

Communities: Live locally, but speak and think globally

Marcel LaVergne Ed.D.

From the classroom



to the world



The Communities Strand of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning encourages foreign language teachers to expose their students to the presence of the foreign language in their own community so that they see the language not as something that exists just in their classroom but that exists everywhere around them. To achieve that goal, teachers need to broaden the definition of “their community” by adopting a much broader view of that word. Their immediate community is the classroom and then it is the school, the town, the state, the country, the continent, and finally the world. The teacher needs to bring the classroom to the world and the world to the classroom.

Self Evaluation (no right or wrong answers)

Are your students aware of the presence of the foreign language and culture in their town or in their state? If so, do you create assignments utilizing that presence?

Do you organize field trips that have your students interact with organizations that serve second-generation or newly-arrived future citizens?

Are your students aware of the contributions the foreign culture has had on the development of the United States, i.e., the Germans in the midwest, the Spanish in the southwest, the French in the northeast and in Louisiana?

Do you engage in exchange programs with schools from the foreign country?

Are your students aware of websites that contain cultural information about the foreign country?

Do your students have e-pals from the foreign country?

Do you invite native speakers from the community into your classroom?

Do you bring foreign programs into your classroom by way of satellite TV?

Does your school subscribe to foreign newspapers and magazines for your students' use in the classroom?

Do you regularly play music from the foreign country?

TIP

As a class assignment, have your students research the contribution that your target culture has made to the development of the United States. What role has France played in the early exploration of the new world? How significant was the presence of the Spanish in the southwest? What contributions did the Germans, the Italians, the Russians, or the Chinese make? Do those countries still have an important role to play today?