

"This is the coolest project ever!" – John K., French 1 student, 9th grade

I chuckled as I crossed the room to acknowledge John and his enthusiasm for the project at hand. He and his group were in the planning stages of creating a video tour of our school, complete with narration and comments about classes and teachers. As they worked on the storyboard for the video, the boys recalled and referred to the vocabulary words for the different parts of a school in their textbook. After several days of planning, filming, and editing with the TV lab students in the editing studio, they had their finished product: "Au Lycée".

This is just one example of how I integrate technology into my French classes at Wissahickon High School. After 9 years of teaching and attaining my Master's Degree in Applied Technology from Chestnut Hill College, I am finally at a stage where I believe that I am successfully using technology in all of my classes, almost every day. I feel that as a language teacher I have the opportunity to teach my students not only another language, but also the cultures of the people that speak French daily. With the use of the Internet, videos, DVDs, CDs, and various pieces of software, I am truly sharing and teaching the language and its cultures with my students. In addition, my students have the opportunity to create real connections with people in those cultures through email exchanges, video-conferences, and discussions online. With the help of technology, my students see French not as a language to learn by memorizing lists of vocabulary and verb conjugations, but as a language that binds cultures and connects millions of people around the world.

This year I am teaching French 5 Honors, French 4 Honors, and French Forum. Although the curriculum of the French 4 and Forum classes differs greatly, the integration of technology in both courses is similar in many regards. For instruction, I use Power Point to both teach and reinforce culture, vocabulary, and grammar points. My students have the opportunity to use a variety of Internet activities to reinforce grammatical structures and vocabulary taught in class through the website provided by their textbook publisher as well as online activities I have created and/or found on the Internet and linked to my personal website. The students also use the Internet for Web Quests, research, and activities based on real French language websites. Using software such as

Word, Publisher, Power Point, and similar programs, my students create a variety of technology-rich projects such as videos (School Tour, A Trip to the Doctor, Shopping in Town), multi-media presentations based on Internet research (A French-Speaking City, A Trip to the Islands, Paris Attractions) and publications such as a hotel brochure, a children's book, or a tourism poster. Lastly, I use a variety of videos, DVDs, CDs, tapes, and feature films in French to expand and enrich the textbook-driven curriculum.

Although I infuse technology into the French 4 and Forum courses as described above, the French 5 coursework has an integral technology component. In addition to the activities outlined for my other courses, the French 5 students are using tools on the Internet to interact with students in France and with each other. Through the use of epals.com, my students are currently participating in an email exchange with a high school in Reims, France. The students have their own epals and they are communicating via email, in French and English, on a variety of topics such as personal interests, family life, school, holidays, and hobbies. My students are also discussing many topics with each other on a discussion board through eSchoolBuilder. They have already participated in 11 different discussions, posting and responding to their peers' posts in French about curricular material and topics similar to those they share with their epals. To complete the online component of the course, the students use online workbooks housed at books.quia.com and bravo.heinle.com. There, they complete practice activities that support the curriculum on their own time so that they can use precious class time actually using and speaking the language they are learning.

One might wonder how the above-mentioned uses of technology help my students learn French. As far as the actual language is concerned, the various technology-driven activities provide extra practice so that my students feel more confident and knowledgeable when they speak and write in French. The use of epals and the discussion board has undoubtedly given the French 5 students extra practice in writing and their writing has indeed improved as a result of this extra practice. With these written assignments and other creative projects, the students are using the language for an end result, not merely learning how to conjugate verbs and translate sentences. They are exploring and

using French in real-world contexts that provide a meaningful use of the language and a productive change to the derived scenarios and activities provided in their textbooks. The use of visual and auditory technology provides the students a focus on culture and real-life language use as well as tone of speech, body language, gestures, and interaction with real target-language culture.

Although teachers share their expertise with their students and textbooks provide grammatical structures, vocabulary lists, and activities to support them, the language learners of the 21st century need more to truly learn and embrace the language, its cultures, and its use in the world outside the walls of the school. I believe that the integration of technology in my courses has helped my students learn how to better read, write, speak, and listen to French. Most importantly, however, its use has encouraged them to develop into more worldly and knowledgeable citizens than if I used the textbook alone. The students are motivated, the information is out there, all we need to do is embrace it and use it!