



Community Comment

February 2011

French is *Fantastique* at Community!

by Elizabeth Bernhardt

Around 1673 Père Jacques Marquette and travel companion Louis Jolliet led an expedition to expand “New France” here in North America, reach the Pacific Ocean, and develop a trade network. They achieved their goals, described the territory, and attracted French families who settled our area. In 1764 Saint Louis was officially founded as a trading post by Pierre Laclède and his stepson Auguste Chouteau. They hoped the post would become an important French village and named it in honor of thirteenth-century King Louis IX.

Today our French heritage lives on in subtle ways. French names dot local maps: Laclède, Gravois, Florissant, Crève Coeur, Belleville, Prairie du Pont, Ste-Geneviève, and more. Vernacular French architectural styles stand across Soulard, Benton Park, and the Central West End, with Saint Louis’ spectacular Hôtel de Ville (City Hall) as our grandest example. A strong collection of French art can be viewed at the St. Louis Art Museum, our civic heritage can be examined at the Missouri History Museum, and we can eat *boeuf bourguignon* at Chez Léon or buy *baguettes* at La Bonne Bouchée. French is studied all over: from graduate students at Washington University to kindergarten full-immersion students at St. Louis’ new Language Immersion School.

Community School is known for its strong traditions, and it is fitting that our city’s history and heritage live on and are

honored with our continued study of French—and our students have studied French from the time of the founding of our school.

Thanks to the excellent work of Community School’s French teachers Lori Marusic and Veronique Gardet (and with the enthusiastic help of P.E. teacher Christine Bugnitz) our current children are learning

On a beautiful snowy day in January I had the opportunity to spend the day at school and see how our French program works. I looked forward to this opportunity since I am a Francophile and first learned to speak French while spending a year abroad with a host family through American Field Service in the *Suisse-Romande*, French-speaking Switzerland.



French in exciting and innovative settings. Studying French offers diverse benefits: our children’s minds are expanded as they label and explore the world with different words and from different perspectives; they learn about the magnitude and importance of France’s history and the French-speaking world’s ongoing contributions to worldwide culture; our children will also be educated travelers, able to communicate and maybe someday work directly with people in French-speaking places in their journeys around the world.

I began the morning with Veronique Gardet, who works with children from the early childhood division and who is new to Community. I had the exciting opportunity to interview her in French and learned that she has lived in the United States now for about ten years, is married to a Frenchman, and enjoys spending time with her children. *Bien sûr*, her family speaks French *à la maison*! They also spend time SKYPE-ing French cousins back in Paris and Marseille and Veronique’s father who currently works in Togo, French-speaking

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2010-2011

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Headlines:

A Message from Matthew Gould

Community School Embarks on ISACS Accreditation Process

As a member of the Independent School Association of the Central States (ISACS), Community School is required to undertake an extensive accreditation process every seven years. That time is upon us. A principle function of the ISACS accreditation process is to guide schools toward an ideal of educational excellence by measuring schools against the highest possible standards.

Of course, ISACS schools differ from other schools in substantive ways. First, ISACS schools are independent and have the following characteristics:

- They are governed by a Board of Trustees.
- They are financially independent.
- They have a stated policy of non-discrimination in admissions and employment.
- They are approved through a recognized accreditation process.

Second, ISACS schools are subject to certain means of accountability including:

- They must satisfy their constituencies concerning the quality of their educational program.
- They must meet the published ISACS standards for membership.
- They must demonstrate their commitment to quality and growth through participation in the seven-year cycle of the evaluation process as established by ISACS.

Throughout the ISACS accreditation process, schools are closely monitored for adherence to three fundamental goals. First, does the school comply with the ISACS Standards for Membership? Second, does the school provide full and accurate



disclosure of its mission, philosophy, program, qualifications of its professional staff, procedures and services, and congruence between the School's stated mission and its actual program and services? And, finally, does the School conduct a comprehensive study of strengths and challenges resulting in plans and priorities for school improvement in all areas?

So what does this all mean for Community School? Very simply, it means that we will be busy for the next year and a half making sure that the accreditation goes smoothly. This year, several tasks will take place. First, the Board of Trustees will approve and reaffirm Community School's mission and philosophy statements. There is broad agreement that Community's mission statement – Nurturing the Gifts of Mind, Body & Spirit – as well as the supporting philosophy statements and Guiding Principles, accurately captures the ethos of our very special school. Second, the School must fully update the entire school curriculum. Because we update portions of our curriculum every year, this task is not too daunting; however, the faculty has been busy this year ensuring that the curriculum will be fully updated by June. Third, the School must conduct a constituent survey. Shortly after Spring Break, the School will survey parents,



Headlines, continued:

teachers, and alumni regarding all aspects of Community's program and operations. Please watch for announcements about the ISACS Constituent Survey because we will want feedback from everyone. Finally, this year, we will begin organizing the process of developing our Self-Study. Kathy Fitzgerald (Early Childhood Director) and Sandra Cirrito (Early Childhood Learning Specialist) have agreed to chair the self-study process, and I am confident that they will do an exceptional job.

Next year, we will write our Self-Study Report. This will involve a comprehensive self-examination involving broad, community-wide participation. In the self-study, we will identify our strengths, weaknesses, and plans and priorities for the future. It is a great way to evaluate all aspects of the School and institute

improvements where appropriate.

The final step in the ISACS accreditation process is the Evaluation Visit. For Community, this visit will be in October 2012. At that time, Community will host an ISACS accreditation team chaired by an experienced Visiting Team Leader and composed of teachers and administrators competent to assess the various aspects of the School. The Visiting Team Report will be based on findings from the visitation and a comparison of these with the Self-Study. I am confident that our ISACS team will be dazzled by the depth of the learning experience found at Community School!

The process of self-reflection and school improvement is ongoing at Community School. We are extremely proud of our

school but we are never satisfied – there are always areas in which we can grow and improve. The ISACS accreditation process gives us the opportunity to formally delve into self-reflection as we develop plans and priorities for the future.

It is an exciting time for Community School as we are poised to be recognized as a regional and national leader in elementary education. I will keep all constituents posted on our progress toward reaccreditation and look forward to everyone's input as well.

Matthew

Spring Forward!

by Wilmetta Toliver-Diallo

It may be crisply cold outside, and the trees still frosted and bare, but spring is almost here! Your garden beds and planters can soon be blooming with beautiful flowers and lush foliage, if you make plans to visit the Community School Flower Sale on Tuesday, April 19!

Choose from a variety of premium hanging baskets, bedding plants, ground covers, and potted flowers to dress up your garden for spring. Your children will have the opportunity to shop for flowers, vegetables, herbs, cacti and gardening accessories the day of the sale. Kids love digging in the dirt and planting colorful flowers and vegetables. Gardening is a fun outdoor activity for the entire family!

Remember, pre-ordering is definitely

the preferred method in order to ensure you get the best selection. Watch for pre-order forms in your child's Friday folder on Feb. 25. Additional forms can be downloaded from the Community School website. All pre-orders may be picked up the day of the sale between noon and 5:00 p.m.

All proceeds will go towards the Community School Scholarship Fund.

Volunteers for the day of the sale (with or without green thumbs) are still needed. If you are available, please contact Wilmetta Toliver-Diallo at (314) 922-0968 or Rita Daniel at (314) 965-8789.



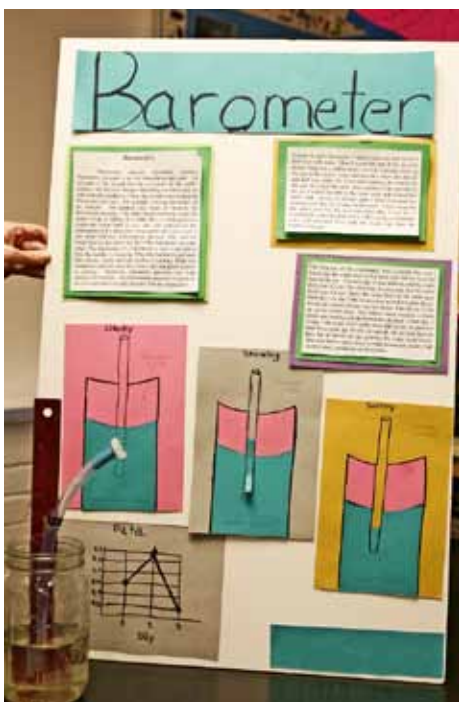


Differentiation in the Classroom

by Michelle Hammersmith

We all hear about differentiated instruction, but what exactly is it and how is it being implemented at Community School?

By definition, differentiated instruction means structuring classrooms so that students have multiple options for taking in information, processing ideas and expressing what they learn. Differentiated classrooms provide various avenues to acquiring content, to making sense of ideas, and to developing product so that each student can learn effectively (Tomlinson 2001).



That sounds interesting, but how can it be applied to a subject, such as science, when the whole class is learning the same thing? Science and nature teacher Amy Kilpatric teaches grades 2, 4, 5 and 6. She said she uses two methods of differentiated instruction in her classroom. The first, she calls “whole group,” in which the whole class may be learning the same concept, but she teaches to different learning styles.

“I keep the students engaged by using different methods, such as songs, art projects, kinesthetic activities and relay games,” said Ms. Kilpatric.

She’s helping second graders learn about different types of rock through songs and games. Students enjoy a game of “pass, pass, stop,” in which Ms. Kilpatric holds up a type of rock, students pass it around and when she says, stop, the student holding the rock has to identify it and do an activity.

Ms. Kilpatric also offers multiple options for projects. Many times students are assigned a project on the same topic, but are offered a choice in how to express what they have learned such as designing a poster, writing a song, making a game or conducting an experiment.

The second method of differentiated instruction, Ms. Kilpatric said, focuses on the “challenge,” in which she offers students choices of projects labeled challenging, more challenging and most challenging. For example, fourth graders recently built weather instruments. The *challenging* assignment involved



building a representation of a weather instrument; the *more challenging* asked students to build a weather instrument that actually worked; and the *most challenging* took it one step further and asked students to design an experiment using their weather instrument.

“I enjoy teaching to lots of different learning styles,” concludes Ms. Kilpatric. “Differentiated instruction allows me to meet individual students where they are, and challenge them to be their best.”

Next, I wondered, how is differentiated instruction used in reading, math and social studies? I spoke with third grade teachers Megan Futhey and Shannon Galfi.

Students are repeatedly assessed throughout the year and grouped accordingly in literature and math, said Ms. Futhey and Mrs. Galfi. Students are also given pretests in certain subject areas, such as spelling. “These assessments allow us to meet the students where they are and tailor the curriculum to match their skill levels,” said Mrs. Galfi.

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Photos: Left - Examples of differentiated science projects on weather instrumentation. Above - Fifth grade science students working on a project of their choice on vertebrates.



Differentiation, continued:

Differentiated instruction is then used within the groups. For example, in math, one group might be learning multiplication tables through music, another through linguistics with partner practice, and others through writing and drawing pictures.

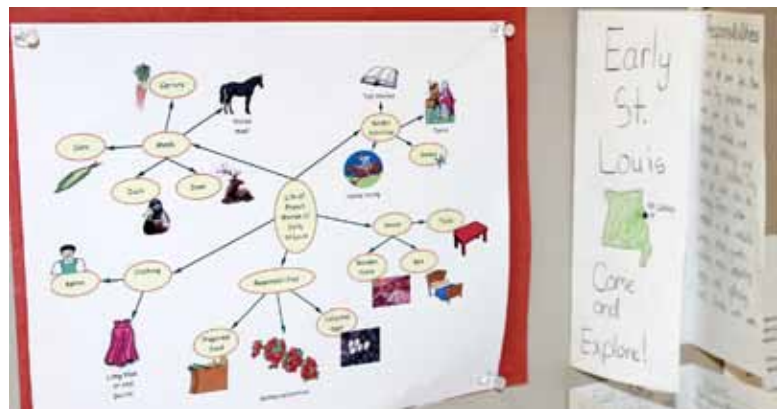
In social studies, students were offered different ways to research and display

information on the topic "What Life Was Like in Early St. Louis Around 1764." Some students wrote rap songs, others designed travel brochures or pop-up books, while others designed a Kidspiration web on the computer.

Ms. Futhey, who is new to Community School this year, said she was impressed with how much Community School

uses differentiated instruction. "It's more work for teachers because it requires more planning, but the benefits to the students are absolutely tremendous."

Photos: Examples of "Life in Early St. Louis" differentiated projects. Left: Sketch including home, clothing, food and role in society; Right: Kidspiration web and travel brochure.



Counting on Community

by Mark Palmer

This year's Annual Giving Campaign has been a little different than those in the past. We notified all our wonderful supporters earlier than usual, we made a big push to receive gifts and pledges prior to December 31, and we enlisted a group of dedicated parent volunteers to help us contact each family and ask for participation.

These changes have produced great results! We have nearly reached our monetary goal of \$476,000 and our participation levels are higher than they have ever been at this time of the school year. We give an enormous THANK YOU! to everyone who has given thus far.

There is still a little way to go, though, so we ask each family to support Annual Giving. The funds raised have an

immediate impact on our students and teachers, and your participation is a true vote of confidence in Community's educational excellence. Please contact the Advancement Office to make a donation or for more information.

Don't forget to mark your calendar for the upcoming Community Classic Parties! The Family Party - "Worlds of Fun" - will be held at the School on the evening of March 4. Bring the entire family for dinner, activities, and a night full of fun! The Parent Party will unfold at Mandarin Lounge on April 16. You won't want to miss either! Look for more information about each party in your Friday Folder.

Thank you to everyone for your support of Community!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Family Classic - Friday, March 4

Taste of Community West County - Wednesday, April 6

Circle of Learning Speaker Series with Dr. Robert Brooks - Thursday, April 7

Parent Classic - Saturday, April 16

Assembly Reception for Debbie Willis & Jim Hoots - Thursday, May 5

Hats Off to Hoots reception - Thursday, May 12

Class of 2005 Alumni luncheon - Sunday, May 15



French, continued:

West Africa.

Madame Gardet cleverly introduces French vocabulary through songs and physical games to her SK classes during physical education, and thanks again to this innovative mix by Christine Bugnitz (whose French, by the way, is *très bon!*). The kids begin by singing a song “*Bonjour, comment ça va*” and after just a few months of immersion are able to understand enough French to talk about the weather, move into different tai-chi positions (e.g., *l’arc-en-ciel, les oiseaux, la prière au soleil*, etc.), know their colors and shapes in order to



play games, and more. Class is dismissed by calling out the names of the months (*janvier, février, mars, avril*, etc.) and the children line up when they hear their birthday month called out. With laughter and movement they are effortlessly learning the language.

Kathy Fitzgerald, Community School’s Early Childhood Director, states, “We are committed to exposure of a second language in the early years. Brain research shows that the early childhood years are the best time to establish neural connections and building these when children are young creates a flexibility that allows them to adopt additional languages with greater ease,” which explains why Community introduces French as soon as possible: to its Nursery students. Kathy continues,

“If children wait until puberty, it is much more difficult to acquire a new language. And combining movement with language learning has proved to be an effective tool for children to develop meaningful vocabulary.” Thanks to that successful pairing of P.E. and language, Kathy makes an amazing observation, “We are seeing children use French outside of class as they play during recess.”

Madame Gardet’s first grade class was next, and these bigger kids meet in the classroom. Thanks to her “always in French” policy, the children speak with fantastic accents, read the date and other information from the calendar, and understand much vocabulary, including voices heard on a CD pairing colors and objects: *corbeau noir, tomate rouge, arbre vert, rose rose*, etc. And their class’ native speaker, Coumba, inspires all classmates to do their best!

In the afternoon I had the pleasure of meeting with Lori Marusic who has been sharing her love of all things French at Community for the past 17 years—what dedication! She first learned French when living with a host family in Orléans and remains in close contact with them.

Her classroom teaches us about the French-speaking world. French is an official language in thirty countries, is widely spoken in at least ten others, is an official language of the United Nations, and is one of the two official languages of the European Union. 136 million speak French as a first language and as many as 500 million speak it as a second or learned language. Madame Marusic’s colorful flag collection (including *drapeaux* from Guadeloupe, Suisse, Québec, Haïti, Sénégal, Belgique, Tchad, Côte d’Ivoire, Monaco, Mali, etc.) reminds

students of the importance of this language and culture around the globe. Her classroom, however, is predominantly decorated in classic French style to set the *ambiance*—and was installed by Community’s drama teacher, Caroline Zarinelli. The stimulating classroom features an iron café table and chairs, a carved lion fountain, a cut-out of the *Tour Eiffel*, a column decorated like a *chateau* tower, an ancien-régime painted doorway with its address affixed in traditional navy and white *numéros*.

Despite the traditional *décor*, as I listened in on Madame Marusic’s final class of the day, sixth graders were keeping perspective in the Francophone world. After warming up by playing *ton-ti-ta* (tic-tac-toe) they were asked questions in French (and answered in French) about Sénégal. They have been studying that country’s capital, geography, citizens, area and official languages (French and twelve others). Madame Marusic also mentioned that our sixth graders study French four days per week—and as she noted, that is probably more than any other sixth grade class in the St. Louis area. Her students are also kept busy reading French cartoons and mini-novels. Their curiosity is great—and their knowledge of French and of the French-speaking world will surely be a steppingstone to their acquisition of other languages and to their better understanding of other cultures down the road.

On a final note, in order to help our children improve their French at home here in St. Louis, what can we do? Madame Gardet suggested that we let them watch their favorite movies in French, movies that our kids already know and love. We can do this by simply changing the language option to ‘French,’ which is available on the menu of so many films today: *Cinderella* will become *Cendrillon*; *Finding Nemo*: *Trouver Nêmo*; *Toy Story*: *Histoire des jouets*; *The Aristocats*: *Les aristochats*; and *Tangled*: *Raiponce*. *Vas-y*, click that ‘French’ option button and help them learn this language!



by Shari Bussmann

They're Classics!

"Is that a mime over there?" "Hey, did you just see that juggler - on STILTS?!"

Mark your calendars for Friday, March 4 to travel around the world at the Community Classic Family Party, "Your Passport to Worlds of Fun." All kids will receive a personal passport to collect stamps as they travel to regions of the world that are familiar to them through their studies at Community.

Regions featured will include a European sidewalk café for great food and entertainment. Head to Asia and have fun learning and making crafts unique to China and Japan. Continue your journey to Australia, Africa and India for fun crafts, a movie, and more. Live music, fun, and games are sure to round out your night at a South American Fiesta, including visits to Mexico and the Bahamas.

There will also be special exhibitions throughout the evening featuring martial arts and African music and dance.

The Family Party is an opportunity to come together with kids and parents and have a great time celebrating Community. While this is not considered one of Community School's fundraisers, we do have great opportunities to raise a little money for the School through a fun gift basket raffle. You can purchase raffle tickets (\$10 each or six for \$50) for baskets brimming with wonderful items for everyone in the family:

- For girls: A Project Runway basket for the fashionista.
- For boys: games, games, and more games!
- For the family: Asian and Indian themed baskets with karate lessons, restaurants, jewelry, movies, books and more.
- And, the popular American Girl Doll: Kanani from Hawaii, the Girl of the Year for 2011, includes a starter kit of 3 outfits, surf board, and her pup.



Remember the party and advertise all the fun we have at Community with a styling Community Classic sweatshirt that will be available for sale for \$20 for youths and \$25 for adults. Admission for the party is \$15 for individuals or \$45 for the family. We hope to see you on March 4 from 5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. for a great night with your Community friends.



Your fortune predicts that the evening of Saturday, April 16 will include laughter, friendship and amazing sign-up parties! Make your destiny a reality at the Community Classic Parent Party, an adults-only gathering at Mandarin Lounge in the Central West End. Take pleasure in the company of Community parents while enjoying delectable hors d'oeuvres and luscious libations, listening to the scintillating sounds of both live and mixed music.

While there, you will have the opportunity to sign up for parent-hosted parties to be held during the spring, summer or fall. These parties range from a family gathering at the Magic House to a Car-

dinals' game in the Chairman's Suite. All are guaranteed to provide lifelong memories! Additionally, try to outbid all others for the great silent auction items, including the coveted Cornucopia Parking Spots! All proceeds directly support Community and our children.

This unforgettable party begins at 7:00 p.m. Plan now to be there. You will receive your invitation before Spring Break, with responses due by April 1. The cost is \$90 per person. Be the master of your fate at the Community Classic Parent Party!



After School is Abuzz

After School Programs have never been busier! Anyone who still thinks the campus closes down at 3:05 should stop by and see what's going on.

Our Extended Day Program has 85 students involved, not to mention occasional drop-ins. The kids do homework, play games, have a snack, and play in the gym or outside, depending on the weather.

Homework Club has 34 students diligently improving their study skills and long-range assignment planning.

And then there are the "mini" classes! With an astounding 190 students par-

ticipating in 13 classes, there's something for everyone from JK through Sixth Grade! Math, LEGO robotics, photography, chess, cooking, arts & crafts, and circus skills are just a few of the activities going on right now.

Keep in mind, this year we're adding a third trimester of "mini" classes. Information will be arriving soon about these classes that will meet after spring break.


If your child hasn't gotten involved in one of these great after school programs, what are you waiting for?




Above - Students working on a creation in Beginner LEGO Robotics. Below left - JKers & SKers doing some "Mathmania." Below right - 3rd-6th grade students working on digital photography skills in the computer lab.





Focus on Faculty


 Please join us for an assembly and reception honoring retiring teachers **Debbie Willis** (4S) and **Jim Hoots** (P.E.) on Thursday, May 5. Reception immediately following 8:15 a.m. assembly.

 Knowing that after 32 years at Community, many past parents and alumni will also want to extend their best wishes, there will be a reception in honor of **Jim Hoots** (Hats Off to

Hoots!) on Thursday, May 12 from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. here at Community.

 Several teachers will be attending an Arts Integration Academy conference in Denver on integrating fine and performing arts into classroom curriculum. Science teacher **Amy Kilpatrick**, Art teacher **David Lang**, 4S teacher **Mike Pieroni**, 6th grade teacher **Pam Qualy** and drama teacher **Caroline Zarinelli** will take part.

 Community School is pleased to welcome student teacher **Brittany Key** this semester. Brittany is working in Art with David Lang, and is finishing her Bachelors of Fine Arts degree with teaching certification from UMSL.

 Director of Communications **Laura Falk** recently began writing a biweekly parenting column for the *Ladue-Frontenac Patch* online newspaper.