



SEEKING (AND EXPLORING)

LA FRANCOPHONIE

by Anita Griffiths

“Our trips are evolving to nurture a sense of citizenship as students explore la Francophonie in a purposeful way.”

– Dr. Josep González



Painting by Hannah H., Level III.

PER·SPEC·TIVE

n: \pər-ˈspek-tiv\

a : the interrelation in which a subject or its parts are mentally viewed

b : the capacity to view things in their true relations or relative importance*

*Definition from the Merriam-Webster online dictionary.

INTERNATIONAL TRIPS HAVE BEEN a beloved institution at TFS for more than 40 years, with the intention of awakening our students' international perspective. This perspective is introduced through language, nurtured by teachers from around the French-speaking world, honed through the study of international curricula, and lived through exchanges and trips that have taken our students to China, France, South America and even Russia.



French students from St. Érembert with TFS Level I students.

Last year, our Level I students celebrated 20 years of exchanges with Saint Érembert school in Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The exchange has given hundreds of students the chance not only to live with, but live like their host family. For TFS students, it may be their first time living in a small apartment, eating dinners late at night, and having to share a room. It may also be the first time they use their French for days at a time, fully immersed.

“ALLEZ! ALLEZ!”

For Shaw Z., LII, the differences in daily life were surprising. He notes, “my French family lived in an apartment with a lot less space, so it meant we tried to use things less, and keep things tidier.” Both Shaw and Amrita K., who also went on the exchange in 2016, were welcomed into families where greetings are kisses and dinners are heavy. When she participated in a city race with her *correspondant*, she found the similarities with Toronto races remarkable, until she heard the cheers of “Allez! Allez!”

If there is one word to describe the exchanges, it’s connection. Teacher Chantal Malcolm ’97 has chaperoned the exchange five times. Each visit, she has noticed the depth of connections the *correspondants* have with each other – after spending almost two weeks together in France as virtual strangers, the students are incredibly excited to reunite just weeks later in Canada. She says the connections she sees are genuine, and many are long-lasting.

For Amrita, the experience was pivotal – she says that she got her first real taste of life in France, and is eager for more. She especially appreciated the overnight trip to Normandy, as the French and TFS students visited Juno Beach, where Canadian and allied troops faced heavy German resistance during World War II. Retracing the soldiers’ steps on the beaches and seeing the names on crosses of those who made the ultimate sacrifice was eye-opening for both sets of students, and more meaningful as they learned about it together.

These types of experiences help students understand their rights

as individuals, as well as their responsibilities as citizens in the world. “Lessons about war, peace, history and culture become much more profound when lived *in situ*,” explains Dr. González, Head of School. “It is for this reason that our trips are evolving to nurture a sense of citizenship as students explore la Francophonie in a purposeful way.”

The goal of Judith Gorry, director of student life, is to create rich, age-appropriate experiences that are culturally relevant, include significant acts of citizenship and allow for bonding time. Before each trip, curious students learn about French current events, the arts, history and about their host school. As well, the students shadow their host students – participating in the same classes and sports, and also experiencing family life, trying new foods and shopping at the local market. “The *raison d’être* of this exchange is to respect differences, to celebrate commonalities, to practise language skills extensively, to experience something new and memorable together and to encourage deep social connections,” she explains.

One student famously told Mrs. Gorry that she finally understood why she goes to TFS – that being able to live in a French country opened up a whole new world. “French is a vibrant, living language that helps the students communicate meaningfully with each other in and out of the classroom,” she says. “It gives life to what they’re doing at TFS every day.”

Another trip that is now in its second year at TFS, and open to Grade 7 students from the West Campus, is the Switzerland exchange. Led by French, history and geography teacher Fabienne Leonard, the trip offers an international experience to younger students and many opportunities to expand the students’ world views.

Mme Leonard shares that Institut Florimont, like TFS, is a French national and IB school, which means that the students there are learning the same curriculum, but in a completely different setting. “We realized that there are very different ways to learn,” she notes, explaining that the classrooms are in traditional rows, with school running until 4:30, and no athletic offerings for students.

While the students were able to enjoy treats like learning to make chocolate, their activities also included a tour of the United Nations and the Red Cross museum. “Our students realized that the IB was invented by the Swiss, and the IB spirit can be seen in both the United Nations and the Red Cross.”



A lesson in fencing in Switzerland.

Garvey K., who went on the 2016 trip, notes, “Just to be at the UN, where so many important decisions are made, and learning that at the UN all countries are equal, and that the world can cooperate for the benefit of everyone,” made the trip especially memorable.

For Bronwen E., the exchange surprised her in how much her French proficiency progressed. “When I first arrived, speaking in French was a lot to take in,” she shares, “but by the time I left, I was *thinking* in French.”

Exchange trips provide a window into a new world, and a way to know oneself outside of one’s home environment. Through French, through the demands and joys of travel, and through new friendships, our students reap immense lifelong rewards that are both unforgettable and far-reaching. **T**

Learning to make chocolate in Switzerland.



CAN AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE START AT AGE 3?

As early as PK, TFS students are taught the skills of inquiry through the Primary Years Program of the IB, setting them up to become learners who reflect the IB Learner Profile. How do such young students learn to be open-minded, risk-takers, principled and caring, among others? Through books, poems, songs and folk tales, through art exploration, trips into their community, and classroom explorations. In Kindergarten, this may include learning about people’s similarities and differences, with an objective of becoming tolerant and respectful; in another grade it may be an inquiry into how different cultures express their ideas through the arts. The development of an international perspective is purposely embedded in TFS’ curriculum, as one of the three pillars of the new Strategic Plan, and sets the stage for incredible experiences in later grades.