

Northern Accents

N M U D E P A R T M E N T O F M O D E R N L A N G U A G E S A N D L I T E R A T U R E S

THE FRENCH TABLE, POINTS OF INTEREST:

- The French table provides students the opportunity to speak in French.
- This organization provides an informal place to learn outside of the classroom
- Attendance can provide extra credit for lower-level FR students

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THE FRENCH TABLE

The French Table is an informal French conversation group and a social gathering, held weekly at a local cafe. The French Table was organized at the beginning of Fall semester 2000 and currently meets at The Panini Grill, Tuesday evenings, 6:30-8:00pm. It is open to students and people in the community who want to speak French and/or who are interested in France, Francophonie and French and Francophone culture.

Although the meetings are informal, the French Table is a productive and effective learning experience. Students from lower level French class get extra credit for each session they attend. In addition, students from some classes must sign up to attend one meeting during the semester for a quiz grade. They must seek out and introduce themselves to the host of the evening, and converse in French on the latest topic of their studies in class. For example they may describe themselves, someone in the group, or members

of their family. Then they may stay for the remainder of the session to participate in the discussion prepared by the host.

The French Table is hosted by upper-level students. Fall 2004, for example, is hosted by students from FR 495, Cinema and Theater course.

Each student hosts one evening during the semester, for which they receive a grade. The student plans engaging topics they want to introduce for discussion and presents them to me over a phone call prior to the meeting. After the session the student reports back to me, detailing the events of the evening.

In spite of the effort the students must put into this activity, they seem to enjoy it tremendously. Many attend on regular basis, without meeting any requirement at all. April Spray says: "[La] Table Fran-Haise has become a social event! It's a great way to practice without any pressure and to learn more by correcting each other." Most recent students have had other com-



Nell Kupper, advisor for the French Table

ments about the French Table. Rose Soderbloom notes that "the French Table benefits me socially ... but culturally it is enriching when there are people who have either lived or studied or visited Francophone countries and people and can share their experiences and knowledge of the language with me ... Whenever I feel like I may never get to go to France, I find inspiration at the Table. Bringing non-student members of the community into the Table aids in the sharing of personal experiences to those of us who haven't traveled."

A FEW MONTHS AT VANDENBOOM

The following article is a reflection piece written by Jason Woolman about his experiences implementing a German program at Vandeenboom Elementary School in the Fall of 2004. Jason is currently studying abroad in Germany.

The gift of language, a major turning point in the history of humankind, is something that sets us apart from all other creatures in world. Language ranges from monotone simple words to clicks and grunts and almost musical multi-toned syllables. With such a diversity of ways to communicate in the world, I don't see how it is possible not to want to learn at least one other language.

This fall Dr. Kathleen Heikkila was doing a project in Inquiry Learning at Vandeenboom Elementary. I had mentioned on one occasion how important language is and how much I thought teaching grade school children is important. She brought this up at a board meeting and the teachers and principal were ecstatic.

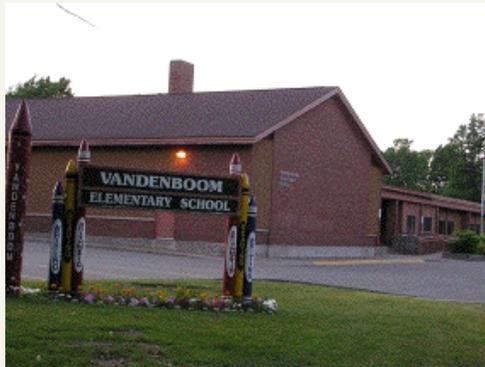
Dr. Heikkila then introduced me to Jessica Straczowski, a native-born German who is doing graduate research with Dr. Heikkila.

Jessica and I developed lesson plans and ideas for implementation at Vandeenboom for fall semester, and beyond, if things went well.

My first day I was so nervous I wasn't able to sleep the night before. "What if they aren't interested?" "What if I mess up?" There were so many questions and worries—and all for naught. When I first went into Mrs. Schwark's third grade classroom, I knew I had nothing to worry about. I introduced myself as "Herr Woolman" and talked about Germany and

German culture. We looked at a map and colored the different parts of Germany that are the most important to know. But the best part was introducing cognates: I put up a list of particular German words that are similar to English, in order to show them that they knew more German than they thought.

Each Friday when I went in they took out their German folders and wrote down the German words I introduced. They then wrote them phonetically, the way they hear them, so that if they had any problems they could look back and see how the word sounds.



Class started each day with "Guten Morgen" followed by a review of material from the previous class. Then we would go over simple phrases or terms such as: "Wie geht's?", "Wie alt bist du?", "Ich heisse...", "Wie heisst du?", and so on. For each phrase I would make a sign that included the German phrase, the phonetic value underneath, and a picture relating to it. Then, hanging beneath it, would be the English translation. In this way, if they had any problems they could look at or point to it, if need be.

After our introductions and phrases, we moved on to the day's lesson. We progressed through numbers and letters and got past colors, the days of

the week, months of the year, and family.

I tried to base lessons on what was taking place at the time. For numbers we did counting with Halloween figures, since it was almost Halloween. We did family members and made a "Stammbaum" (family tree) for them to take home, since it was Thanksgiving.

The children always had questions and they were all exceptionally good. One question concerned umlauts. "Does every letter take an umlaut or just some?" was my favorite question. I explained that just most of the vowels do. I explained what umlauts are and how they change the pronunciation of words. I gave him "Apfel" as an example. "Apfel is one apple, but Äpfel is more than one apple." Learning this made him so happy: confided in me that "Äpfel" was "his' word!"

At the end of class we would go over more questions and do our good byes in German.

Mrs. Schwark, their teacher, was of immeasurable help. She would work with the children when I wasn't there. She had them recite the days of the week when they read their daily lunch menu, and she used German numbers and months for some of their math lessons.

Never have I met a group of children more willing to learn, or a group that wanted to so much. There are several elementary schools in the Marquette area, but Vandeenboom is one of the less well endowed. If not for such initiatives, how else would the children be exposed to experiences like this?

Cont'd on bottom of next page.

SPANISH MOVIES FOR SPANISH STUDENTS

Maria Offer is offering Spanish movies weekly at the Whitman Commons for Spanish students. Times and days will vary, so she encourages students interested to contact her for the pertinent information at 227-2006.

The first of these films, *Maria Full of Grace*, will be shown on Wednesday, March 2, at 6 p.m.

About the movie:

Maria, a young woman from Colombia, wants to make a better life for herself. Tired of her job stripping thorns from roses, she decides to take a job as a "courier" and finds herself faced with dangers she did not expect.

Winner of many awards:

- Nominated for Academy Award: Best Actress: Catalina Sandino Moreno
- One of the Top Foreign Films of 2004, according to the National Board of Review
- IFP Independent Spirit

Awards: Nominated Best Feature, Best Director, Best First Screenplay

- San Francisco Film Critics Circle and Washington Film Critics Association: Nominated: Best Foreign Language Film
- 2004 Sundance Film Festival: Audience Award
- 2004 Cartagena Film Festival: Best First Film, Best Actress
- Best Colombian Film: Special Jury Prize, Catholic Clergy Award

For more information on *Maria Full of Grace*, please see

<http://www.mariafullofgrace.com/>

A full synopsis of the movie can be seen at

[http://es.movies.yahoo.com/](http://es.movies.yahoo.com/db/f/2/0/2000275.html)

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VANDENBOOM CONT'D

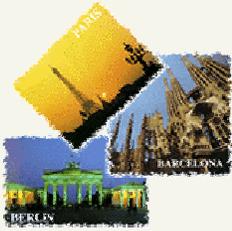
On one of my last days in class the children recited perfectly all the things we had gone over. They had even made me a book. In it was a picture of us all together in class, and then creative pages by each student, on which they drew pictures and described what they liked most about class. It is the single greatest present I have ever been given. I would like to thank Dr. Kathleen Heikkila for her support and help in setting up classes at Vanden-

boom; Jessica Straczowski for all of her help and aid in lesson plans; Professor Strauss and Herr Ahlers for their constant support and ability to answer my relentless questions and for being so accommodating; and the administration, teachers and students of Vandenboom for letting me be a part of their class.

This winter I am traveling to Germany. I have been waiting to go all my life. The children at Vandenboom Element

tary are the only reason I would ever forego the possibility of staying there.





**N M U D E P A R T M E N T
O F M O D E R N
L A N G U A G E S A N D**

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Knowledge of languages other than English and sensitivity to other cultures are becoming increasingly important as we start the twenty-first century. Efficient transportation and instantaneous communications make contact with people from around the globe more and more frequent and vital. Technological advances offer exciting new opportunities. Northern Michigan University's Department of Languages seeks to open doors to students in their wide-ranging pursuits through the study of languages and cultures.

C ' E S T B I E N : F R E N C H C L U B

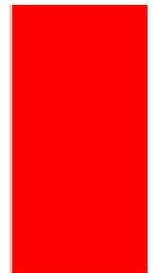
The French Club has been very busy lately, but well-fed, having recently enjoyed a fairly successful crepe sale. Based on the how well this sale went, they are considering another crepe sale in the last month or so of the semester.

Their culinary adventures have continued with French-themed dinners and 'movie nights' at members' houses.

French movies are a focus

among members of the club, who are bringing their favorite French films to campus. This project, while still in its planning stages, will involve showing these movies on a projector in either the Language Lab or the Whitman Commons.

Alex Buck, president of the French Club, discussed the possibility of collaborating with Francophiles and movie lovers at Virginia Commonwealth University to bring French directors



to Northern.

Finally, the French Club is discussing the possibility of taking a trip to a Francophone city in Canada, such as Quebec or Montreal.