

# Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation in my Diverse Classroom

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## Abstract

As mentioned in the Annenberg Media **Workshop 6 video: Valuing Diversity in Learners**, the term diversity means different things to different teachers. Middle school teacher Deb Terry described her Springfield, MA classroom perfectly. Many students are third language learners, have varying special needs, come from many corners of the world and include the talented and gifted. When Deb's students enter high school, many arrive at my doorstep, room 319, at the High School of Science & Technology, a few miles away. Let me assure you that eleven years ago, my high school was "state of the art," but has had no improvements related to foreign language technology since that time. Teachers in my department await their proverbial "turn in line" to use one of the two laptop carts available to the entire faculty. The Springfield, MA public schools operate at a 70% poverty rate, and students come to us with many challenges and needs. I have been in the classroom for 30 years, and my teaching has changed significantly from the "drill and kill," "precise response" exercises which prevented students from showing their ability to use the language effectively. Then again, at that time, I assumed that all my students would become foreign languages experts. How could the language **NOT** excite them as much as it did me?

## Introduction

My teaching changed when I began to empower the students in front of me. My lack of technology skills eleven years ago was embarrassing. In order to survive, I came to rely on my students who often became my mentors. As I listened to their explanations, I realized that I had to alter my approach and engage the students more in planning and carrying out the rigors of a foreign language class. Gradually, those first few steps involving students became more assured, and about that time I became aware of the theory of multiple intelligences. I realized that my students included learners who were smart in different ways: word smart, number/reasoning smart, picture smart, body smart, music smart, people smart, self smart, and nature smart. That fact prompted me to reflect on how I was teaching and to try out new approaches.

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**Nancy Gadbois** is a veteran teacher in an inner-city urban district in western MA, where the poverty level is higher than 70%. She teaches French at the current time, but has also taught Spanish. She became a certified Intel Teach to the Future a few years ago, and learns technology from her students on a daily basis. Professional development, locally and nationally has helped her keep active and enthusiastic in her career.

## The First Steps

It all starts that first week of school. Just as Barbara and Deb probe into students' interests, I do the same on a simple query form. This sheet asks for names, ages, phone numbers, emails, and also: "What are your hobbies? What do you do on weekends, after school, and who's your favorite musical artist? Have you a pet?" This info informs my semester curriculum, as Rick Donato mentions in the video. Rarely does a child refuse to answer any of these questions, but that option is explained to them in advance. I explain to them that their answers will help me choose topics of discussion and allows me a peek into "their culture."

By gaining the trust of the students those first weeks of school, a stage has been set for a disciplined but embracing environment which respects difference, allows for trial and error (student and teacher) and fosters positive teaching and learning. Rick Donato asked about meeting the needs of 35 students in one classroom, and that's always a challenge, but all the more reason for gaining the confidence of students early in the semester. To further complicate matters, it's not at all uncommon to have 35 students in several different levels in one class. Anyone who reads the FLTeach listserve has seen the stories and the pleas for help in classroom management, especially in combination levels in one class period. I currently teach on the 4X4 semester schedule and each class is 90 minutes in length. At least one class includes 2-3 levels of one language. I remind my students almost immediately upon meeting them that our classroom is a mini United Nations. Geographically, my students are from many world countries. The rich cultural heritage that comes in the backpacks of my students influences my lessons daily. The United Nations metaphor also includes a discussion of employee career options as explained on the UN web site. The reason the UN exists is reviewed: (<http://www.un.org/aboutun/basicfacts/unorg.htm>) The purposes of the United Nations, as set forth in the Charter, are to maintain international peace and security; to develop friendly relations among nations; to cooperate in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in attaining these ends. Students are often unaware of the official languages of the UN: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. Most are not informed as to the variety of careers open to the interested: administration, civilian police, finance, legal and social affairs, conference services, etc. They are reminded that the cafeteria staff, the lawyers, the guards, the boutique vendors, etc, all have different functions but must coexist professionally for the UN to operate effectively.

## Sharing Tips

Which activities engage ALL learners? What I propose to do next is to describe certain activities, and then to actually show the steps involved including assessment along the way. Textbooks and ancillaries today are excellent, and provide a wide range of options to the teacher as he/she tries to reach all learners. When I reflect on what I use to supplement the required, sequential curriculum map in Springfield, and how I assess with an eye on engaging all learners, several categories emerge:

- Web sites which provide information to interest both the “locals,” and the students from other countries. Case in point: the Paris-Dakar race which takes place every January. Cars, motorbikes, quads, and trucks compete for titles in this huge media event. The countries of France, Portugal, Spain, and the areas of northern, western and central Africa are targeted. My NASCAR fans were thrilled two years ago when American Robby Gordon first became involved in this grueling rally. Because there are often West African students in the classroom, it’s not difficult for a teacher to search out the daily reports, both on Robby’s site and Yahoo France to get accurate reports of what’s happening. When my African students add in their personal accounts of the event, the interest grows. I usually print out a summary of the event, thanks to Yahoo France, and we jumpstart the class with this reading. The readings are recycled into all levels of the language classes. Beginners can grasp the cognates, underline what they think they recognize, and momentum builds from that basic step. Geographically, the stages of the race as outlined on web maps are priceless. Desert terrain, seaside clips, images of baobab trees and oases interest the class reading *Le Petit Prince* as well as the students who are finishing their initial semester in level one on the 4X4 block. Teacher generated worksheets are in themselves an assessment of what has been learned. But for the student who is photo smart and/or visual-spatial, designing a target language brochure or advertisement to promote the road race is another assessment option.
- Authentic documents in the target language are critical. Twice a year, I receive class sets of *Contact Costco* from Quebec. Those magazines are free, and can be requested in any Costco store in that province. I’ve been fortunate to have a good relationship with the company and often email the CEO both teacher and student-created lesson plans for surveillance. The publication is not a translation of the US version, and can challenge my AP class and any other levels. I often look for the pages that highlight Canadian provinces and the goods/services available there, from gas stations, rugs, delicatessens, hearing aids, pharmaceuticals, etc. The more able students create personalized treasure hunts for the earlier language learner. The students include page numbers to facilitate tasks, because this publication is written for heritage speakers of French. There’s always a Canadian debate on topics such as minimum wage, mandated immigration limits, stem cell research, national health care challenges, etc. Then, there’s a survey as to how readers feel, and when pertinent to my teens, we do in class “sondages” on the topics at hand. The “photo of the year” issue and the frequent emphasis on *la nourriture québécoise* never fail to impress the classes. The release dates in Canada of current DVDs and the changes in title of favorite movies are of interest as well. Despite the fact that students love technology, there’s nothing quite like a “hands-on”, personal copy of any francophone map. Like the Costco magazines, these maps enable paired or grouped students to refine their investigative skills by answering questions based on actual maps. My Paris (*Galeries Lafayette*) maps are several years old, but as students of all abilities try to negotiate meaning by discussing *arrondissements*, locations of train stations and famous cemeteries, the paper map becomes a valuable teaching tool. Holiday Inn in France laundry lists, Cairo newspapers in Arabic and French

announcing the times of morning and evening prayer, for example, are other recent aids that fascinated and engaged my learners. For 25 years, I have used McDonald's placemats, often double-meaning, to initiate discussion, and the French website (<http://www.mcdonalds.fr/>) offers innumerable options for teachers and students. The official home site of McDonalds restaurants worldwide (<http://www.mcdonalds.com>) allows readers to select their country of choice and compare and contrast global food and services. The verbal/linguistic learner may be assessed by correct answers to teacher/student generated lesson plans involving precise answers, or becoming spokespersons for a topic related to any of the authentic documents. The auditory/musical student will enjoy listening to the fast food rhymes on the McDonald's web site and develop his/her own version. The bodily-kinesthetic learner, working solo or in pairs might choreograph a simple dance event to compliment a jingle. The logical-mathematical students enjoy designing tables on the computer for any tasks, including plotting graphs on data received.

- Scholastic magazines in target languages are in many teachers' toolboxes, and the listening CDs which now accompany them, along with lesson plans and suggested ideas for teachers, are excellent. There's always a musical selection, in various genres, which interests the class. These magazines also encourage student "buy in," by highlighting appropriate teen culture in fashion, music, food, cosmetics and accessories. I ask students to report out orally to the class on one topic which interests them. The intrapersonal student will prefer to work alone and develop his/her language skills by comparing what the magazines offer as leisure-time activities, for example, and quickly point out whether or not he/ she agrees.
- Musical CDs in the target language appeal to most learners, and provide an outlet for exercises which appeal to different learning styles. The late Carole Fredericks, a musical icon known and celebrated in Europe and Africa, was born in Springfield, MA, and attended schools there. However, until her untimely death in 2001, her music was virtually unknown in this country. Thanks to a series of coincidences, leading to interactions with the family of the late Carole Fredericks, my classes were able to develop projects that involved many types of intelligences. The link <http://cdfmusiclegacy.com/program/project.html> has those projects available for viewing. Because the students worked in pairs, moved around the classroom, designed clip art or used existing options, chose photos from the web, and sang Carole's songs while working, the project was quite popular.
- Student ambassadors as co-teachers, whenever possible, enhance the learning in my classroom. Any heritage language learner, French, Creole, Wolof or Arabic, current or former students who are in the building, often make 10-minute "spotlight appearances" to captivate the attention of my regular students. Faculty cooperation in this matter is critical, and most often, those students are released at the discretion of their teachers, to come to room 319 to inform both teacher and student.

## Assessment

How do I assess the diverse student population in front of me? Alternative assessment strategies which involve performance assessment are integral to the student showing his/her best ability. After studying the lyrics to a song in the target language (interpretive mode of communication), students interview each other regarding the sense and/or rhythm of the selection (interpersonal mode), and determine how to introduce the artist/song to another audience (presentational mode). If feedback is given, both individually and/or to the entire class, with the intent to improve scores on the next mode, this is an example of an Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA). To see this example “in action,” go to <http://learner.org>, select foreign language, and scroll to the link at the bottom of the page, Teaching Foreign Languages K-12: A Library of Classroom Practices. The Assessment Strategies video and resources available there are intended to clearly demonstrate examples of evaluation. The online video, rubrics and teacher-created lesson plans are available at no charge.

### Strategy One: Performance Assessment

My tool box always includes study of a popular poem by Jacques Prévert, *Déjeuner du Matin*. This poem is of interest to both student and teacher for a variety of reasons, including intrigue and structure using simple vocabulary. The poem is universally appealing, and the tasks will be recycled and reformatted according to the knowledge base of the learner. Any poem, in any language can be presented in this format. It is understood, however, that rubrics will be provided to the students in advance. Refer to: [http://www.education-world.com/a\\_curr/curr248.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr248.shtml)

**Setting the stage.** The class brainstorms (in target language and in English, depending on the level of class) about poetry in general, and how poets express joy and despair. Students are asked to recall a favorite poem, and indicate their feelings about this poem. Students learn about Prévert’s life and his role as the “poet of the people.” (15 minutes)

**Step one:** Introduction to Prévert. (interpretive mode) Students read the poem individually in French, and try to comprehend the meaning. Depending on the class’ ability, “word banks” are available to assist learners with very limited language skills, especially in level 2. They then write a simple sentence or two, paraphrasing the author’s words, to prove they understand the scenario.

**Step two:** Paired work. (interpretive and interpersonal modes) Students are assigned a partner, and read both the original poem and their interpretation of the poem to each other. The paired students then interview each other in the target language about liking or disliking this poem, and poetry in general. At this time, students are asked to read aloud their partner’s comments to the class. Class discussion about the purpose and message of the poem takes place.

**Step three:** Students as Poets. (interpersonal and presentational modes) Students become poets and develop further the original poem. Both a prelude and follow-up verse are required. Students peer edit each other’s work, and then decide how best

to present the “new poem” to the class. Options may include multimedia presentations, dramatic or musical presentations. Artwork in the form of poster displays is another alternative and is encouraged. Students defend their work, answer questions and receive comments from the class audience.

**Step four:** Into the school community. (presentational mode) Students share their work with another target language class and/ or display their final projects on school bulletin boards and websites, if possible. The above alternative assessment has elements which appeal to multiple learning styles, including the verbal linguistic learner, the bodily-kinesthetic learner, the musical and interpersonal learners, as well as the intrapersonal learner.

### **Strategy Two: The John Collins Writing Method**

Two years ago, the administrators at my school hired John Collins as a consultant ([http://www.collinseducationassociates.com/Collins\\_Writing\\_Program.htm](http://www.collinseducationassociates.com/Collins_Writing_Program.htm) ) for all disciplines, to improve students’ free responses in writing. The staff studied his research, and began to implement the program. His program offers 5 writing options, and the type 3 writing has substantive content and meets up to three specific standards called “focus correction areas” (FCA). Revision and editing are done on the original. There is one draft, which is read aloud by the student and reviewed to see if the draft completes the assignment and meets standards set for the focus correction areas. Once students become familiar with how to double check the focus correction areas, their results improve, sometimes drastically. On the other hand, my more able students have failed this task, because they did not meet the FCA’s mentioned. This assessment alternative has made a difference in many students’ scores. Several possible generic foreign language FCA’s, for example, included “underlining five verbs written correctly in the past tense,” “three to five adjectives, used accurately and circled,” or percentages based on “content accuracy” in upper levels. My colleagues in Chinese developed another set of FCA’s: in a Chinese 2 class students will be asked to write a paragraph about themselves by using five pieces of information that they have learned previously with a combination of pinyin and characters. The paragraph should include their name, age, nationality, family, likes and dislikes. Rules for capitalization and punctuation should also be observed when the paragraph is in Pinyin. The pinyin should be spelled correctly. The characters should be legible. The proper use of grammar on adverb 丨 (yě), 丨 (hěn), verb on 丨 (shì) / 丨丨 (bù shì) and 丨 (you) / 丨丨 (méiyǒu) will also be observed. The writing samples are based on a score of 100, and students can see clearly why they did well or not so well. All John Collins writing must be double spaced to allow for teacher correction and student tasks such as underlining, circling or numbering. As John explains, it’s about the learner, and making teachers’ lives easier. Once students (and faculty) understand that this is an expectation of the administration in our school, and begin to practice the format on a regular basis, the “buy-in” is almost universal. The following two examples are samples of actual type three assignments done in 2006, semester two. The number in the middle of the page at the top indicates that this was the first in a series of type three assignments. The FCA’s are in the left corner.

**Le français 2**

- 1 -

5 complete sentences 25 pts nom \_\_\_\_\_

5 accurate verbs circled 40 pts date \_\_\_\_\_

accurate spelling of 3-5 locations, underlined 35 pts

Title: Write 5 sentences indicating where you are going.

(les endroits et le verbe aller)

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- 14 -

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

**Le français 3**

- 2 -

Eight facts about Carole 40 pts nom \_\_\_\_\_

Eight accurate verbs underlined 40 pts date \_\_\_\_\_

Correct use of 3-6 adjectives 20 pts

Title: On vient de terminer une étude de Carole Fredericks et de sa famille en classe.

Ecrivez une lettre à un/une amie qui ne connaît pas la musique de Carole, en essayant de la présenter.

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

## Realia Exercise 1: Costco Quebec

The following is a student/teacher effort to acquaint students with Costco Québec magazines. Upper level students created these questions, peer-edited the work and then shared their drafts with me.

\*\*word bank: deviner=to guess at; citation=quote; pub=publicité (ad), recette=recipe; porter=to wear; déguster=to eat; le sens=meaning p. 18

1. Il y a une citation par François Mauriac sur cette page. Ecrivez-la en français.

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2. Regardez cette page. Pouvez-vous deviner le sens de cette citation? Ecrivez-la en anglais.

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3. Pour mon neveu, qui a 3 ans et ne lit pas, quel titre dois-je choisir à cette page?

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4. Que veut dire “la librairie Costco?”

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p. 19

5. Quels 2 DVD ont été offerts dès le 19 juillet?

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6. “Vers la lecture” offre des suggestions pour les parents. Devinez plusieurs, et écrivez-les en anglais.

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p. 20

7. Il y a combien de livres sur cette page? \_\_\_\_\_ Le(s)quel(s) vous intéresse(nt)?

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8. Expliquez pourquoi ce livre vous plaît.

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p. 21

9. Regardez la pub. Que dit la jeune fille? (en anglais)

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10. Qu'est-ce qu'elle porte comme vêtements?

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11. Elle a quel âge, croyez-vous?

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p. 24

12. Regardez le sandwich énorme à la page 24. C'est bien, non? Combien d'ingrédients pouvez-vous identifier? (regardez la recette à gauche) Faites une liste

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p.41

13. Regardez les deux enfants. Décrivez ce qu'ils portent.

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## Realia Exercise 2: Subway

Here's an example of a worksheet based on Subway restaurants in Quebec. Ask for a class set of placemats to use.

NOM \_\_\_\_\_

(le premier restaurant SUBWAY® au Canada a vu le jour en juin 1986 à St-John's, Terre-Neuve. Depuis, SUBWAY® a pris son expansion: des Parcs Nationaux de Banff et de Jasper jusqu'à l'école secondaire Bishop O'Bryne de Calgary—selon le site web)

Word bank: la devise=slogan; les petits trucs=tricks; reconnaître=to recognize; la grille=grid; sous-marin=sub; garantir=to guarantee; réduire=to reduce; croyez-vous=do you think; le miel=honey

1. On parle de quel restaurant 'fast food'?
2. Où se trouve ce restaurant?
3. C'est quoi, la devise de Subway?
4. Regardez la grille. Combien de viandes reconnaissez-vous? Faites une liste.
5. Quel sous-marin a le plus de calories? Pourquoi, croyez-vous?
6. Quel sous-marin a le moins de calories?
7. Quel sandwich est le mieux en ce qui concerne les calories, les gras et le cholestérol?
8. Quelle catégorie reste la même n'importe le sandwich? Combien de fruits et de légumes sont recommandés chaque jour?
9. Expliquez "6 po et 12 po."
10. Pour me garantir beaucoup de légumes, qu'est-ce que je dois choisir? (je déteste le pain!)
11. En général, comment est-ce que je peux réduire les calories et le gras?

## Conclusion

You will note that several of the above sheets include << word banks, >> page references, and on occasion, some English phrases. All are intended to reach all learners. Knowing that most of my classes have at least 30 students, I will often pair students, to facilitate learning and to assure better success. These sheets appeal to ALL learners in ALL levels. Level one students will need extra time on task. Level three students will move along with more ease. AP students and heritage learners will complete the sheets, and sometimes author the work. It's one way of engaging all learners, and diversifying instruction.

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