

Advocacy Checklists -- K-12

We all hope that we won't need to act to save our French programs. But if I do learn that my French program is in jeopardy, what can I do? These checklists lay out some of the basic first steps that teachers and other stakeholders can take to start a program of defense.

There are three checklists in this document: One for K-12 teachers, one for parents of K-12 students, and one for K-12 students themselves. (There's a separate one for post-secondary faculty.)

Much more is available at the French Advocacy Resource Bank, but this can get you started!

Advocacy Checklist for Teachers

Here is a checklist that can be used by teachers whose French program is in jeopardy and who want to work actively to save it.

1. Don't panic!

You have a great product. Your "customers" (students, parents, and decision-makers) need to be sold on the value of the product!

2. Get the facts and analyze the situation.

Seek information about the situation from the appropriate supervisor. If more details are needed, follow proper lines of communication in your school district.

_____ Have a complete picture of the situation. How real is the threat?

_____ How far along in the decision-making process is it?

_____ Determine who the decision-makers are. Are they Board members? Superintendent? Administration? Curriculum director? Department chairperson? Many of these?

_____ Analyze your school's mission statement to be able to express how the study of French is an integral part of the mission.

_____ Be prepared to show how your World Language Department's mission statement is linked to your school's mission.

_____ Find ways you can work with your colleagues to support efforts to save the program.

3. Seek support and allies.

_____ Enlist the help of your colleagues:

_____ Department head

_____ Other world language colleagues

_____ General education colleagues

_____ World language teachers at other levels in your district/sender/feeder schools

_____ French programs at state and local colleges and universities

- _____ Contact your area's AATF chapter president. (Find out who that is at frenchteachers.org)
- _____ Contact your teachers' association or unit district representative.
- _____ If feasible, inform your current and former students about the situation facing the program.
(*Note: In some schools teachers are instructed by administrators not to share this information with current students*)
- _____ Contact parents who will rally other parents to work on behalf of your program.
- _____ Contact your state's department of education or world language supervisor to get information about world language enrollments in your state.
- _____ Contact your local and state representatives asking for support.

4. Seek more information on how to deal with the situation.

- _____ Consult documentation in the [AATF French Advocacy Resource Bank](#) for background information and for strategies.
- _____ Contact teachers whose French program has faced a similar situation and who succeeded in preserving the program. (Ask what they did to prepare their case, what worked and what didn't.) *Note: AATF chapter officers can help identify these schools*
- _____ Consult the [AATF website](#) for promotional and advocacy brochures, documents, and articles.
- _____ Use the AATF French Advocacy Resource Bank to help you present your case to administrators, school board members, your Chamber of Commerce, etc.

5. Determine your strategy.

Decide what kind of arguments will be effective. Be prepared to address the following kinds of questions:

_____ Financial:

- Are there special expenses attached to the French program?
- Will keeping the program necessitate hiring a part-time teacher or offering health benefits?
- Is it too costly to support an exchange program to Canada, France or another Francophone country?

Be prepared to offer solutions such as fund-raising, support from merchants in the community, etc., to those monetary problems.

_____ Philosophical:

- Does your program help the school carry out its mission statement?
- Is cultural diversity an integral part of your program?

_____ Student-oriented:

- What value does the French program bring to students? minorities? Spanish-speakers? "First Generation" students?
- What do exchange programs do to enrich the academic and cultural experience of participating students?
- How does having French studies in the curriculum help foster cultural diversity within the school?

- _____ School-oriented:
 - What does the study of French add to students’ understanding of the world? (History? Sciences? Art? English language?)
 - What does your program contribute to other disciplines?
 - Why French, anyway? (In addition to other languages?)

- 6. Get to know your community and school district.
 - _____ Familiarize yourself with the community and district by using the School Report Card, school profile, school public relations newspaper sent to the community, alumni association, etc.
 - _____ Use the knowledge of veteran teachers.
 - _____ Be able to target your arguments to your particular community.

- 7. Make use of AATF Advocacy materials.
 - _____ Provide parents with AATF French Advocacy Resource Bank materials that offer SUPPORT and INFORMATION. (Find these materials at advocacy.frenchteachers.org.)

- 8. Encourage parents to contact the local press.
 - _____ Help parents present a case to your community through local and regional media.
 - _____ Have them send letters of support that provide positive assessments of the French program, indicate how intercultural understanding has been instilled in their children, show how positive relationships have been developed between students in France (or other French-speaking countries) and their own children, and among students in your own high school.
 - _____ Write or suggest articles featuring both present and alumni students’ achievements in college or the workplace thanks to the preparation provided by your program.

- 9. Use social media to manage and raise support.
 - _____ To communicate with members of your advocacy group and solicit support from people in your community and beyond, create a public space to publicize your cause. Make sure that information and discussion stay positive and polite.
 - _____ Launch a webpage, a blog, or social networking page.

- 10. Don’t forget to:
 - _____ Listen politely to critics.
 - _____ Resist replying with hostility to criticism.
 - _____ Offer information rather than opinions.
 - _____ Stress the advantages of studying French.
 - _____ Avoid criticism of the value of studying other languages.
 - _____ Network with colleagues, parents and former students.
 - _____ Enlist the help of other French educators.
 - _____ Stay hopeful and positive.

BONNE CHANCE et BON COURAGE!

French Advocacy Resource Bank
American Association of Teachers of French

Advocacy Checklist for Parents

Here is a checklist that can be used by parents whose students are in danger of losing their French program and who are seeking support.

- _____ 1. Encourage your child to get involved by becoming an advocate for the French program, if appropriate.
- _____ 2. Contact other parents, community members, local or state-level business people with connections to the French-speaking community to rally support for the French program.
- _____ 3. Contact other parents to organize meetings, and to create petitions to administer electronically through a web-based program or social media, and to raise general awareness of the situation.
- _____ 4. Contact local, state, and national world language associations for aid, ideas, and support. Find your area AATF chapter and its officers [here](#).
- _____ 5. Consult resources available in the AATF [French Advocacy Resource Bank](#).
- _____ 6. Create materials (brochures, flyers, e-mail messages) that provide reasons to study French. Distribute this information within the community. You'll find resources on the [Resource Bank](#).
- _____ 7. Contact your school council or PTA/PTO for support.
- _____ 8. Present your case to the administration and/or school board. Consider including your student in this presentation.
- _____ 9. Write letters to the editor of your local newspapers. This can be a very powerful tool.
- _____ 10. Contact the local press to inform the public of your campaign.
- _____ 11. Create a webpage, social networking page, or blog to communicate or publicize your situation. Your children can help, when appropriate. Make sure it stays positive and polite.

You, as a parent, are very powerful.

You pay taxes and vote in School Board elections.

Remember:

- _____ 1. Address concerns in a positive and constructive manner.
- _____ 2. Seek solutions.
- _____ 3. Be proactive! Do not hesitate to say something because you think you are alone in wanting to see the French program continue. It's likely that others are thinking the same thing!
- _____ 4. Learning French is a valuable part of your child's education! Act NOW to preserve the program.

Advocacy Checklist for Students

Here is a checklist that can be used by students who are in danger of losing their French program and who are seeking support.

- _____ 1. Get involved by becoming an advocate for the French program. Why do you love your program? Why is it valuable? How can you share your feelings positively with others in your school and community?
- _____ 2. Contact other students, parents, and community members to ask their support.
- _____ 3. Use technology to spread the word and keep people updated on your efforts. With parent permission, consider creating a social media post, Facebook group, web page, video, etc. Always stay positive and polite in these media.
- _____ 4. Write a letter to the editor of your school newspaper or local newspaper.
- _____ 5. Contact the local press to inform the public of your campaign.
- _____ 6. Create materials (social media posts, brochures, flyers, email messages) that provide reasons to study French. (You'll find some on the [French Advocacy Resource Bank](#).) Include links to web pages that talk positively about studying French. Distribute this information within the community.
- _____ 7. Present your case to the administration (principal, vice-principal, etc.) and/or the school board. Prepare a speech, record a video, create a PowerPoint presentation, etc.

You, as a student, are very powerful.

Your parents pay taxes and vote in School Board elections.

Remember:

- _____ 1. Be sure to write down the points you want to make so that you sound professional when speaking to a group.
- _____ 2. Ask your parent(s) for permission and get their input, proofreading, advice, etc. They will be able to help you in your efforts.
- _____ 3. Always address concerns in a positive and constructive manner. Be passionate, but realize that you also need logical arguments to be truly convincing.
- _____ 4. Seek solutions.
- _____ 5. Be proactive! Do not hesitate to say something because you think you are alone in wanting to see your French program continue. It's likely that others are thinking the same thing!

_____ 6. Learning French is a valuable part of your education! Act NOW to preserve your program.