

International Education Week
November 15 - 19, 2004

Teacher name: Nancy Gadbois

School: H.S. of Science & Technology

Project title: The Community Standard in French 5/6 class

Grades of students: 10-12

Goals of the project: Target language communication in a real world context

Description of project: After reading an interview in their text, *Destinations*, students contacted the Québécoise author directly to express their condolences to her, following the suicide of her husband. Sylvie Frechette was a Barcelona Olympics gold medal winner in synchronized swimming, whose husband took his life several days before the competition. She participated in the Olympics, despite her sorrow. The Internet provided us with her current profession (director of "O" Cirque du Soleil, Las Vegas) and place of residence, and students wrote to her directly, via snail mail, expressing their feelings and admiration of her noble character. She responded warmly to the students via email.

Activities: Reading the French non-fiction short story; discussion of reading comprehension strategies; sharing of answers to the questions in class; the creation of hard copies of sympathy letters and cards to the author.

Conclusion: Students are compassionate and caring. They did not hesitate to write a letter of regret to Ms. Frechette, after reading her interview where she discussed her fiancé's death in 1994. The class includes native speakers of French from West Africa, and their fluency in the language, including formal expressions of sympathy, added to the richness of this activity.

Significant quotes:

"I did this assignment because she was a really hard-working woman. When she lost her husband, I wanted to show support for her."

"I wrote this note to her because I believed that as a powerful woman, she needed someone else to tell her how much she's respected."

"I wrote the letter as a simple classroom exercise at first, not knowing that it would ever be sent to Mme Frechette."

"I enjoyed writing to Sylvie Frechette because it gave me the opportunity to express my sympathy for her tragic loss. Also, it gave me the opportunity to practice my written French."

"I wrote a letter to Sylvie Frechette because I felt sorry for what happened to her, the death of her husband."

"I was honored and grateful to send her my condolences."

"I did the project because it wasn't like any other ordinary assignment. We were able to send a letter in French to an actual francophone celebrity."

Student participants: Ainsley Davey, Nastaran Gerami-Moayed, Kossi Dzefi, Chris Kayego, Patrick Kayego, Stephanie Kro, Ariel Sanchez, Kevin Whalen, Jeannie Smith and Vanessa Kouabran.