

## Cynthia Teixeira Proves French Not Passé at CHS

Teixeira immerses students in language and culture inside and outside of the classroom.

By [Russell Waterman](#) | July 3, 2012



Do not ever ask Cynthia Teixeira to pardon her French.

Now in her 8<sup>th</sup> year of teaching the popular language at [Coventry High School](#), “Madame” (that’s what everyone calls me,” she says) begins a new adventure this week.

Indeed, from July 1-22 she becomes the unofficial ambassador for French teachers.

“I am the only person in North America to be chosen by the Government of Quebec to study at Université Laval this summer in Quebec City,” she said. “The travel expenses are covered by the Pastore Grant awarded to me by URI. I’ll be studying teaching methods, linguistics and Québécois culture and history with French teachers from all over the world at the largest French-speaking university in North America.”

“French is spoken and written by over 280 million people in 50 countries on all five continents,” she explained. “It is not spoken just by Parisians and Quebecois. There are many different accents from Northern and western Africa to Asia. People don’t realize that French is such an important part of the global economy and it is the second most important working language at the United Nations.”

Besides being an advisor for the CHS World Language Club (French, Spanish and Italian), Teixeira is also a basketball and football cheerleading coach. But it is as a French teacher where she has made the most impact on students.

Born in Paris, she studied at La Sorbonne and Temple University, at first majoring in Political Science and French. Her parents are both educators. But she only followed her parents’ footsteps after serving as an intern at the American Embassy in Washington. “I was there during the 9/11 crisis and there were lots of threats being made,” she recalled.

She first taught in New Hampshire for three years.

“I like to bring back the language and culture into the classroom,” she said. And it was not difficult making French relevant to her students’ lives once she arrived in Coventry.

"We have such names as LaFleur, Couture and Jean-Baptiste and some of them do not even know what their names mean in English when they first come into my classroom. New England has a large concentration of families with French backgrounds. And we also have Haitians and West Africans in this state."

She also incorporates music, dance and movies into the classroom against the backdrop of a lit-up 6-foot Eiffel Tower.

"We do a talent show during World Language Week in February where we do dances songs and skits of different languages."

At the end of the year, many of her students take the Le Grand Concours, or National French Exam. "Last year, Andrew Lecampion in Level 2 and Megan Fraser in Level 4 finished in the top 10 nationally and statewide," she said.

But Teixeira goes a step farther in exposing this Romance language to her students and even to parents. "We teach them what's like to be a teenager living in France or in Quebec. And we have taken field trips to Quebec City, Montreal and France with as many as 50 students and parents. We also have a trip planned to France, Belgium and Switzerland in 2014."

Teixeira is a member of the Rhode Island Foreign Language Teachers Association, American Association of Teachers of French in Rhode Island, Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages and other associations. Her "Dances of Many Cultures" presentation was presented at the NECTFL conference in 2008 before hundreds of foreign language teachers.

As the educational and social chair for the AAFTRI, she has some exciting news. "We will be hosting the first-ever national conference in Providence next summer."

Teixeira also credits Christine Hoskins, CHS World Language Curriculum Coordinator, for encouraging her to be innovative in the classroom for her beginner to advanced level students.

[Julie Boyle, Coventry HS English Arts Teacher and 2012 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year](#), said "we need good teachers sharing their investment in education with the public."

And Madame Teixeira continues to share so much of the time and energy invested in learning and living the French language and culture with her students and the community.

"I have a great rapport with the students and parents," she says. "Many brothers and sisters in the same families end up taking classes."

And with that dedication, many students undoubtedly respond with just two words: Merci beaucoup!