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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2014 Volume II: Exploring Community through Ethnographic Nonfiction, Fiction, and Film

Worldbuilding in a Middle School French Classroom: A Community-Based, Communication-Focused Structure for Meaningful Language Learning

Guide for Curriculum Unit 14.02.01
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This unit provides a framework for building a language-learning community in the world language classroom, organizing procedures and activities around the idea of community in a way that empowers students as agents of their own learning and contributors to their learning community. To borrow a term from the literary world, I hope to create a sort of immersive fiction for my students, a world of comfort, safety, language learning and necessary language usage. This world will be created, artificial but believable because the core values will be reflected in the details of the surroundings. It will be a world that requires our language use and protects the comfort level of the student, so that students will be able to grow and thrive in it, progressing appropriately at their own paces.

By getting purposeful about building a classroom language-learning community starting in the fifth grade, as students transition to middle school, I hope to channel the feelings of self-doubt that accompany them, by focusing on student roles and responsibilities to others within the classroom, and using the ways they will relate to each other as reason for communication as well as motivation to support one another.

This unit is written specifically for beginning fifth-grade French classes but may be suitable for language classes in grades 5-9 and adapted to other languages.

(Recommended for French/World Languages, grades 5-9)

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