General Information

More Than 70 Teachers From French-Speaking Countries Travel to Louisiana to Teach in 11 Parishes

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More than 70 teachers from French-speaking countries around the world, including Africa, Belgium, Canada and France, will gather for an orientation meeting in Baton Rouge next week, welcoming them to the state that ranks first in the nation for student enrollments in French language and French immersion programs.

This new contingent of teachers, known as the French Foreign Associate Teachers, will teach French in schools in 11 Louisiana parishes. The group is sponsored by the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, or CODOFIL; the General Consulate of France in New Orleans; the Louisiana Department of Education; and the Wallonie-Bruxelles Office in Louisiana.

The French Foreign Associate Teachers will attend an orientation meeting to help them adjust to their new posts before being dispersed throughout the 11-parish area.

The orientation will be held at the Baton Rouge Holiday Inn, at 4728 Constitution Avenue, from July 30 through Aug.1. The program includes presentations on culture shock, the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum and classroom management. On the evening of July 31, the teachers will participate in Show Time, a special event that showcases their individual talents and themes from their different cultures and different countries.

According to the Louisiana Department of Education, student enrollment in French immersion programs has been on a steady increase since the early 90s.

“In 1991, we had 405 students enrolled. In 2007, that number climbed to 2,755,” said Terri Hammatt, World Language Director for the Louisiana Department of Education. “It is refreshing to note that Louisiana schools are leading the United States in our foreign language immersion programs.”
Among the 91 schools nationwide with French immersion programs, almost 30 are in Louisiana, according to the Center for Applied Linguistics.

“These numbers are even more impressive when you consider the size of our state when looking at that ratio,” said David Cheramie, executive director of CODOFIL. “Nationwide, there are more than 12,000 students enrolled in French immersion programs. Louisiana hosts one-fourth of the nation’s students enrolled in this rigorous curriculum.”

“We were worried about the impact the 2005 hurricanes would have on our recruiting efforts,” said Arnaud Sgambato, Attaché Pédagogique for the General Consulate of France in New Orleans, based in the LSU College of Education French Education Project.

Sgambato was responsible for the recruitment in France.

“In fact, it was just the opposite,” Sgambato added. “We had a tremendous outpouring of interest. All of the teachers we recruited were passionate about this program and dedicated to improving the French heritage in Louisiana.”

The teachers will participate in a three-day series of meetings and workshops with school administrators, Louisiana Department of Education officials, CODOFIL representatives, and LSU College of Education French Education Project personnel before deploying all over Louisiana to begin working in the public schools in early August.

Tuesday’s session of the orientation will also feature dignitaries such as Cheramie; Eliane De Pues-Levaque, permanent representative for the Wallonie-Bruxelles Community in Louisiana; Aude Ghespière, Attachée de Coopération pour le Français; and Hammatt. All will be at the orientation meeting and available for comment.

Meeting times for each session of the orientation will be as follows: 9 a.m.– 7:45 p.m. on July 30, 9 a.m.– 5:45 p.m. on July 31, with the Show Time special event to follow from 7:30-9:30 p.m. and from 8 a.m.– noon on Aug. 1.

For more information, visit any of the following Web sites:

Center for Applied Linguistics www.cal.org/resources/immersion/

CODOFIL www.codofil.org

General Consulate of France in New Orleans http://www.consulfrance-nouvelleorleans.org/

Louisiana Department of Education www.louisianaschools.net