



TECHNOLOGY  
RESEARCH  
COMMITTEE

## **2008 – 2009 Grant Project Report**

**Project Title:** Say do! (C'est doux): The Sweet Sounds of Learning

**Project Creator(s):** Naomi Graham

**School District:** Laurens CSD

**Grant Award:** \$2000.00

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## **C'EST DOUX! : Say Do!, The Sweet Sounds of Learning** **Final Report on project financed through 2008 TRC Grant**

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### 1. Review of Objectives

- offering students authentic assessment opportunity within multimedia context
- improvement of French communicative skills
- providing cross-curricular connections
- showcase personal interests
- bring a meaningful aspect of adolescent life into the classroom

### 2. Narrative of Implementation

A main obstacle to including varied, new or different technology resources in the classroom is the inability of the teacher to control all of the variables. Depending on purchasing departments, technology specialists, and, in my case, music specialists for help can lead to delays and glitches in the implementation of projects. Although I would like to report on a finished project, due to a variety of factors, my final report to the committee is a description of what is still a work in progress.

I originally requested a Mac computer with Garage Band software, since I had some familiarity with that program. I was dissuaded by the technology specialist at my school from making that purchase, since he is no longer supporting Mac technology and would prefer that all school computers be pc's. A major factor in support of making the change was that I would get two computers for less than the cost of one, thereby enabling more students to be working at one time. I spoke with the music specialist at our school to get a recommendation of what music software would best support my ideas, and I requested the purchase of the program that he recommended, Finale, without ever having actually used it. Finale turns out to actually be a music-writing program which additionally has the capability of arranging music in the way that I had envisioned for the students. Due to one delay and another, I did not actually receive both computers in the classroom loaded with the appropriate software until mid-February. A great help to independent work in the classroom was the purchase of headphones for the computers, an item not included in the original project.

Preparation for the project began in October with the study of songs and song lyrics. Over the course of the year, students in French II studied several songs (Des Hommes Pareils by Francis Cabrel, Toi + Moi by Grégoire, and C'est Moi Qui Décide by François Peyrony), paying special attention to how the rhythm of the song fit the meter of the music. We also read through several poems and listened to recorded poems (Il pleure

dans mon coeur by Verlaine, and Demain dès l’aube by Hugo) in order to understand the rhythm structure of traditional French poetic language. The songs that I selected deal with issues such as the common humanity we all share, the importance of coming together in groups, and the rights of children. I wanted to encourage students to pick a topic that they felt was important for their song, an issue that would inspire them to want to communicate through artistic expression. In fact, student topics for songs ended up being original and meaningful: Two songs are about the issue of racism, three of them deal in different ways with student self-image and independence from stereotypes, and one deals with the pleasure of being involved with sports.

In early February, students began to work on their own lyric. I had a student teacher this spring, and while she had responsibility for the class in the last weeks of February and the first weeks in March, work on the song project was suspended due to the specific requirements of the projects that she needed to address as part of her teaching assignment. We have continued to work on the projects since the middle of March, and students have now each completed a song lyric, and each student has a plan for how the song will be set to music (sample student lyrics are included in Appendix A). I still need to work with the music and technology specialists to make sure that I will be able to add in the student voices over the music track in one single recording. To suit the requirements of the Finale program, a voice track needs to be a MIDI file, and I still need to find a software to record MIDI files, so that I can record the student voices and then add it back into the music. To complete the recording and make it available for students to play on cds or mp3 players, I will need to convert the MIDI file to a .wav or mp3 file. I still need to select the software that I will need to either purchase or find as a free download (eg: the midi2wav recorder software is available for \$29.95 from midi2wav.com, and the wav to midi conversion is available from Akoff.com, the Akoff Music Composer software for \$29.00). The music specialist has indicated that he may be able to locate free downloads of the appropriate technology when he has the time to investigate it.

Two of the six students involved in the project used the music-writing software (Finale) to write their own music (see appendix B for an example). This music still needs to be arranged (given chords and instrumentation) before we make the voice recording, and the music specialist has agreed to assist with this. A third student has developed a tune to use for her song, but has not yet put the tune into music notation. The other three students have decided to use commercially available music as a background to them reading or rapping the song. The students in the class who already had a familiarity with reading music are the ones who were able to use this software successfully. In order to make it work for all students, I would need to work with the music specialist to learn how to import the music that the other students wanted to use into this program.

Although my original conception for the project included turning the song into a music video by adding images and using the music as a soundtrack, I do not at this time see

that happening this year. It has taken a lot of energy and commitment to keep the students focussed on this project, and convinced of its value. I would, however, like to extend the project next year with the same students when they are in French III by helping them to turn these completed songs into music videos, as part of a study of film and film technique.

Looking back at the objectives for this project, in spite of the problems I have encountered with its implementation, I realize that this project has succeeded:

- Students received an authentic assessment opportunity within a multimedia context
- students increased communicative skills
- students were provided with cross-curricular connections
- students showcased individual passions and skills

In addition:

- student vocabulary in French was increased through study of songs
- student fluency in French was increased through multiple repetition of self-written lyrics
- the pride and satisfaction that students evidenced on completion of their lyric provides a strong motivational force for continued study

### 3. Report of Expenses

Make Music Finale 2009 Program	2@ \$239.95	\$479.90
Dell laptops	2@ \$567.00	1134.00
4GB Sansa Fuze mp3 player	1@ 89.98	89.98
Labtec Elite Headphones	2@ 10.00	20.00
	Total Expenditures:	\$ 1723.88

Please refer to supporting information as follows:

Appendix A	sample student lyrics
Appendix B	sample student song in music notation
Appendix C	grading rubric for assessing project
Appendix D	bills for items received, as detailed above