

Tips for Everyday Advocacy: Language Clubs

A language club is a great way to enhance your foreign language program. It shows that your language department as an important member of the school community, and it provides a great place for passionate language students to network and socialize with others who have common interests. It's also a great way to get publicity for the department. Get your administration to stop by a meeting or have a student write something about what they do in the school newspaper. Finally, it's a way you too can connect with the community. The more people know about the language club and the program in general, the more support that will come your way.

The responsibility of advising a club is really what you make of it. If you really think outside the box, you can find plenty to do with a language club.

1. Club Day

Most schools have a day where the students can showcase what their club does in the hopes of recruiting more people to join. First, get the students to create posters and flyers. It's a great way for the members to get to know each other. It's also a good time to figure out who your student leaders are going to be for that year. This is very important since many of the students are both motivated by the subject and the possibility of having a leadership role for their college application. Remember these are the possible foreign languages teachers of the future.

2. Holiday Celebrations

Please, really do the holiday justice. Get your students to understand the origins of the holiday they are learning about and the symbolism behind the different cultural artifacts. Have them watch movies and then follow it up with a discussion. Also, a hands-on celebration really makes the event more memorable for them.

3. Social Issues

It's important to have foreign languages students really become global citizens. To do that, it's important to tackle some important social issues in different areas of the world. Provide examples of passionate people who used their language skills to help people in need. We need to provide positive role models for the teenagers today so they can use language to make the world a better place.

4. Movie Night

Use the student's time effectively by showing movies that students would not watch on their own. Of course, make sure it is age-appropriate and something that they can handle yet leaves the student with something to think about. These movies can leave a lasting impact on the student for years to come.

5. Work on a project

The first year of my first language club I had only four girls, but they came every week because they were invested in a video that we were making. It gave them a reason to come back week after week, and they were proud of their final product. The following year these girls became our leaders. When the students saw the video, more of them wanted to become a part of the club.

6. Games

While traveling, I found about games that people play in other countries. Bring those games into the classroom. Even play traditional games like Bananagrams, Bingo, or Scrabble in the target language.

7. Food and Restaurants

Students enjoy food, but sometimes they need encouragement to try traditional dishes. That is where the language clubs come in to the rescue. If you can't find what you need at a local store, then go online to see what is available. Also, talk to local restaurants in your area. It's a great way to make connections in the community. They might do a special menu for the club, offer a discount or speak to the students about their cuisine.

8. Art, Music, and Dance

High school students still enjoy coloring and drawing. There is something comforting in making something with your hands. Play music in the target language while the students work. Display their work for all to see. Talk to the art teachers to see if they are willing to help. Finally, contact a local dance studio to see if they would be interested in teaching a dance class.