



Washington, Tuesday, October 25, 2005

**Speech by H.E. Jean-David Levitte,
Ambassador of France to the United States**

**Congratulations to the ten award winners
of the program recognising outstanding administrators**

It is a real pleasure for me to welcome you here on this special occasion, and reward ten outstanding administrators in Education (Principals, Language coordinators, Assistant Superintendents...), who have been selected to share their knowledge and experience with French officials in Paris and Amiens.

I am all the more happy to have you here since this project is the result of a collaborative effort between the educational office of the French embassy, the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) and the Washington Post whose generous support will allow you to go to France.

I welcome the Executive Director of the AATF, Ms Jayne Abrate and the representatives of the Washington Post, Mr Bo Jones, Publisher and CEO, Mr Ted Lutz, Vice-President of Communication, Mr Eric Grant, Director of Public Relations and Contributions, Ms Carrie Morse, Public Relations Representative.

This 2005 Program is not the first one of its kind: in Summer 2004, an identical program allowed six teachers from the Washington Area to spend three weeks in France. After taking six hours training every day, they had the opportunity to be immersed in the French society and to participate in the world-renowned Festival of Avignon. Let me take this opportunity to renew my expression of thanks to the Washington Post and to the AATF for their strong commitment to be a part of the promotion of Languages and of French in particular.

I was very impressed by the advertising in the Washington Post which gave this program a lot of visibility for so many readers in the Washington area. Once more, our cooperation will prove to be of high quality and I know that it was not easy to choose our six delegates among many applicants.

We are all here today to celebrate your success. Your dedication in promoting the teaching of foreign language participates of the wonderful initiative "2005, Year of Languages" that I was honoured to launch last year in Chicago during the ACTFL Conference.

You are in charge of the organization and supervision of one of the most demanding and valuable tasks which is to educate our children and in the more specific field that concerns us today, to convince American policy makers and citizens that learning languages and mastering international skills are priceless for individuals as well as for nations. They can make the difference between a grim and a bright future for you, for me and most of all for our children.

We all know that learning languages brings in multiple benefits: better skills in one's mother tongue and a deeper appreciation of other cultures, enabling those who master foreign languages to live a more successful life in our globalised political and economic world.

With the long lasting friendship that exists between France and the US, the French language plays a key-role in helping both nations to maintain their common heritage and develop their cooperation.

French remains the third most common language spoken at home with more than 2.000.000 speakers in the US. More than 1.000.000 students take French in Primary schools and more than 4.000.000 at secondary level.

Many counties and states are developing immersion programs and it is more and more frequent to find the French language being used to teach other topics such as Science, Maths or even American History. Our embassy will do everything to support this and I am convinced it will bear precious fruit in the years to come.

The program you will join in Paris and Amiens was designed by our office in Washington and AATF in collaboration with Chantal Manès who was the former Cultural Attachée at the French Embassy. It will provide you with a great deal of information on the French education system and will give you the opportunity to exchange ideas with French Education Officials.

I am certain that this will be an unforgettable time full of wonderful moments, and I invite you to let us know your impressions when you get back and to stay in touch with us.

So let me congratulate you again and wish you a wonderful stay in France. Let us give you a warm round of applause before I leave the floor to Ms Abrate and Mr Jones.