

National Cathedral School



This landscape was created by fifth-grade students at the National Cathedral School in Washington, D.C. Sandra Leibowitz, Phillips Mentor Teacher and long-time French teacher, developed lessons demonstrating how Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party* can creatively teach French speaking, writing and comprehension.



Each student selected a member of *Luncheon of the Boating Party* to research. Dressed as these characters, they interviewed each other in French as part of a school-wide performance. The class then developed a *tableau vivant* (living painting), where they learned to assume the correct pose and position of each character, and created the setting—including this backdrop—for their performance. To augment socio-cultural context, students created restaurant menus and posters relevant to French leisure.

Ms. Leibowitz observed that although some students have great difficulty in pronunciation and accent in French, even shy students were eager to participate in the *tableau vivant* and worked diligently on proper pronunciation for their interview. It seemed that taking on the role of a character, essentially pretending to be someone else, helped the students improve their French with fewer inhibitions.



Sandy has been teaching since she graduated from Wells College and received her Master's of Arts from Yale University, where she became interested in introducing foreign language at the elementary level. She became qualified in Connecticut and taught French at the high-school level, as well as within her third-grade elementary curriculum. She was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to teach high school English in Heidelberg, Germany.

When Sandy returned to the D.C. area, she became a supervisor of the Foreign Language in Elementary Schools (FLES) program in Montgomery County and later in DCPS. She taught summer courses in the FLES technique to French-American teachers at the University of Maryland and gave workshops in the Maryland area, as well as co-authoring a FLES column in *Instructor Magazine*.

When the Jewish Day School was established, Sandy introduced French into the high school curriculum, and also taught at the Hebrew Academy. She is currently at the National Cathedral School in her 29th year of teaching French.

