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Redesigning an Introductory Language Program: A Backward Design Approach

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In response to calls for curricular change in foreign language programs and institutional requirements to evaluate programmatic effectiveness, this article presents a backward design approach to the redesign of an introductory French curriculum grounded in the framing concept of cultural literacy. In addition, data from student evaluations, written exams, and instructor feedback illustrate how program evaluation efforts have contributed to curricular fine-tuning, enhanced assessment practices, and informed instructors' teaching and professional development experiences. The article concludes with a discussion of implications and future directions for curriculum design at all levels of undergraduate foreign language programs.

INTRODUCTION

Research in applied linguistics has long called for curricular change to rectify the well-known language-literature divide by creating holistic foreign language (FL) programs that more successfully move students toward advanced-level language competencies (e.g., Arens, 2012; Byrnes & Maxim, 2004; Maxim, 2009; MLA, 2007; Swaffar & Arens, 2005). More recently, FL departments and other academic units in U.S. institutions of higher education have been called upon to evaluate programmatic effectiveness for purposes of accountability or accreditation (e.g., Norris & Mills, 2016). Yet these challenges are not at cross purposes: Program evaluation can inform curricular innovation, just as curricular change can inspire new forms of evaluation. Noteworthy examples of curriculum revision that address these challenges include projects undertaken in the Department of German at Georgetown University (Department of German, 2011), the German Studies Department at Emory University (Maxim, Höyng, Lancaster, Schaumann, & Aue, 2013), and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Minnesota (Klee, Melin, & Soneson, 2016). Curricular reform in each of these programs began with determining goals and learning objectives. In the case of Georgetown University and Emory University, programs in which literacy served as an overarching goal, curricular reform next entailed selecting relevant content, developing pedagogical materials, and then revising assessment practices. At the University of Minnesota, determination of learning objectives was followed by assessment of student writing. In the future, evidence from this assessment will be used to fine-tune learning objectives and inform adjustments to course content and instruction. Whereas the curriculum reform project at Georgetown University did not follow a bottom-up sequence (changes first occurred in the Level IV course "Text and Context" and later in other levels), changes made to the Emory University and University of Minnesota curricula began with the first-semester language course and progressed through the undergraduate program.

These examples highlight three elements essential to addressing challenges in curricular reform and program evaluation facing collegiate FL programs: grounding curricula in the concept of literacy; adopting a backward design approach to curriculum revision; and building curriculum from the bottom up. The overarching goal of students' literacy development, defined broadly as the ability to interpret and create texts of various genres to communicate across contexts, has emerged as a potential solution to the language-literature divide because it facilitates integration of language and content at all curricular levels (e.g., Byrnes, Maxim, & Norris, 2010; Kern, 2000; Paesani & Allen, 2012). Likewise, the backward design model has offered a robust approach for planning holistic FL programs because it first determines learning objectives that provide a coherent curricular path as well as benchmarks for program evaluation (Leung, 2012; Richards, 2013; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The third key component to responding to calls for curricular change and meeting institutional demands for program evaluation involves building curriculum from the bottom up, starting with the introductory language sequence. Taken together, these three elements can help create holistic curricula that aim to develop students' advanced-level language competencies, facilitate horizontal and vertical articulation of courses within undergraduate FL programs, ensure that objectives, assessments, and instructional practices are aligned, and facilitate a cycle of curricular fine-tuning grounded in program evaluation (Norris, 2006).

The introductory French program detailed in this article illustrates how these three elements were put into practice during a multi-year curriculum revision project. Specifically, I outline a backward design approach grounded in the framing concept of literacy and present results of program evaluation efforts that have contributed to programmatic fine-tuning, enhanced assessment practices, and informed instructors' teaching and professional development experiences. As of the writing of this article, the introductory French program, which comprises the first three semesters of instruction, was the only part of the undergraduate curriculum to have undergone significant revision, although discussion of revisions to subsequent levels of the curriculum are currently underway. Indeed, results from the revision of the introductory program are informing these discussions and will contribute to an articulated undergraduate curriculum that seeks to develop students' FL literacy. The article begins with an outline of the backward design model, which serves as a backdrop for presentation of the revision project and program evaluation data that has informed further programmatic change. The article concludes with a discussion of implications and future directions for curricular change.

THE BACKWARD DESIGN MODEL

A significant characteristic of collegiate FL programs that reflect the language-literature divide is that the main goals of FL education—to enable learners to attain advanced-level language competencies and develop substantive knowledge in literary-cultural content—are often not realized or are at odds in lower and upper levels of the undergraduate curriculum. As a result, these programs “are unable to create statements of valued and realistic learning outcomes for each of the major stages of their undergraduate programs,” and “to project and implement appropriate, articulated educational action for the entire program in terms of curriculum building, pedagogical approaches, and assessment practices” (Byrnes, Maxim, & Norris, 2010, p. 4). A backward design approach can help overcome these problems because curriculum building begins with setting learning objectives that relate to an overarching goal;

these objectives then inform assessment and pedagogical practices intended to enhance student learning.

The three stages of backward design, represented in Figure 1, include: (1) identifying long-term desired results through articulation of learning objectives; (2) determining assessment practices that provide evidence of achieving learning objectives; and (3) implementing a learning plan and instructional activities that put into practice stated learning objectives. Articulation of learning objectives involves identifying what students should know and be able to do as a result of completing a lesson, unit, course, or program. The assessment practices used to supply evidence of those objectives may take many forms, such as in-class participation, exams, homework, journals, or student self-assessment. Finally, the model does not prescribe a specific method or approach for designing instructional activities; rather, any method or approach is appropriate as long as it facilitates student learning consistent with stated learning objectives (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

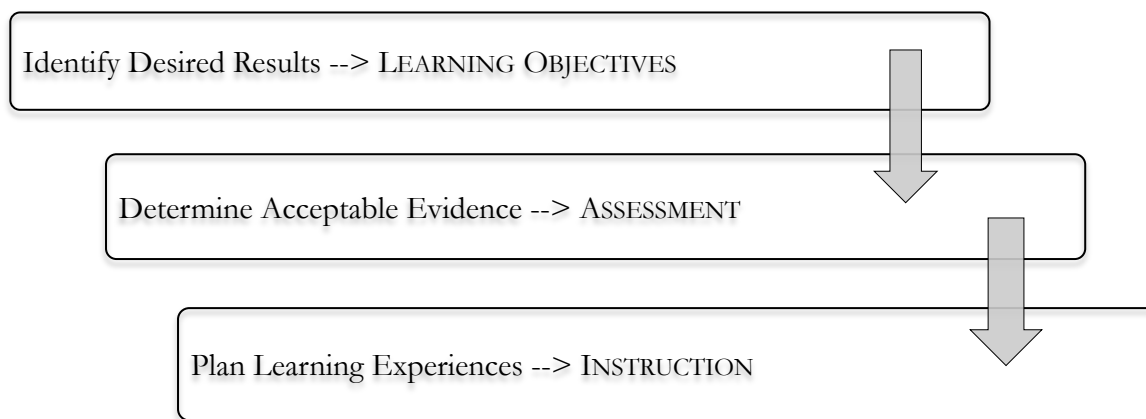


Figure 1. Backward Design Model (adapted from Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 18)

Although the three stages in Figure 1 are presented hierarchically to show the order in which curricular planning takes place, in the case of program evaluation, the assessment stage can be thought of as bi-directional. That is, assessment evidence can inform the determination of instructional practices or adjustment of learning objectives. This bi-directionality is akin to the assessment loop discussed in program evaluation research, which includes defining goals, gathering evidence, interpreting results, and using those results to improve programs and student learning (Leskes & Wright, 2005; Wright, 2006).

There are a number of benefits to adopting a backward design model to restructure FL programs. First, it helps instructors clarify and organize teaching and develop appropriate assessment measures that are focused on what students should know and be able to do after completing a lesson, unit, course, or program (Brown, 1995; Hall, 2001). Indeed, according to Norris (2006), such learning outcomes “serve as the touchstone for curriculum development, instructional practice, learner advancement and achievement, and, to be sure, program evaluation and improvement” (p. 577). In addition, because the backward design model prioritizes student learning objectives, it helps avoid the problem of designing a course with the sole intent of covering textbook content. Instead, the focus is on what

students will be able to do with the content they learn and how instruction can facilitate teaching that content to meet stated objectives (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Finally, empirical evidence shows that organizing and connecting curriculum, assessment, and instruction following a backward design model can have positive effects on student learning and can increase student motivation (Hodaeian & Biria, 2015; Korotchenko, Matveenkov, Strelnikova, & Phillips, 2015).

REVISION OF AN INTRODUCTORY FRENCH PROGRAM

The backward design model was used to frame revision of the introductory French program at Wayne State University. This three-year project, which began in October 2012 (see Appendix A for the project timeline), was a collaboration between the language program director (LPD; also this article's author) and twelve instructors in the introductory course sequence. The intent was to involve all instructors in all stages of the project to build consensus about the program and to provide them with a programmatic perspective on their teaching, a viewpoint they might not otherwise develop by teaching only introductory language courses (Allen & Maxim, 2013; Maxim, 2009). In addition, by giving instructors a voice in programmatic decision-making, the desire was to increase their satisfaction as teachers and their investment in the program's success (Baumgartel, 1957; Buller, 2013).

Our decision to revise the program was motivated by a number of factors, the most important of which were to meet the department's overarching goal of cultural literacy (see below) and to modernize and more closely align our assessment and pedagogical practices. Another important factor was feedback from student focus groups and surveys suggesting that the undergraduate French curriculum as a whole was not adequately developing students' cultural understanding or their ability to communicate effectively about textual content. As such, we wished to inject the introductory French program with more authentic written, audio, and audiovisual texts, and to effectively engage students with those texts using literacy-based instruction and assessment practices.

Before detailing the project, some background on the undergraduate French curriculum is needed. Currently, the curriculum has four loosely organized levels, the first of which is the introductory language sequence. The three multi-section courses in this sequence are overseen by the LPD, are taught by graduate teaching assistants and part-time faculty, and fulfill the university's FL requirement. As is the case at many universities, this sequence functions like a stand-alone program due to its administrative structure and student population (i.e., undergraduates fulfilling the university FL requirement). Yet the sequence is also an integral part of the undergraduate French curriculum given the number of students who complete it en route to a specialization in French. The second level of the French curriculum includes two intermediate-level courses, required of majors and minors, that build on the language competencies and content knowledge developed at the introductory level. Next are two courses at level three that hone language competencies and introduce students to literary analysis before they move on to more specialized language and literature courses in the fourth level. In an effort to modernize all FL curricula and respond to recommendations from an external program review, the department's undergraduate curriculum committee developed a mission statement for its undergraduate programs, which include majors in over ten languages, whose overarching goal is to develop students' cultural literacy. The conceptualization of cultural literacy has three strands: enabling students to (1)

become competent users of language through interpretation and creation of texts of various genres; (2) develop and apply skills in critical thinking, textual analysis, research, and self-expression; and (3) gain specialized knowledge of the historical, cultural, literary, and linguistic characteristics of the language(s) they study. These abilities, skills, and knowledge are embedded within broad contexts that support cultural awareness and the ability to see the world from multiple viewpoints (Department of Classical and Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, 2015).

To realize the department's overarching goal in the introductory French sequence, where students are just beginning their journey toward cultural literacy, we wished to revise the program to prioritize students' foundational knowledge of language, their communicative abilities, and their engagement with authentic texts. As such, we aimed "to reconcile the teaching of 'communication' with the teaching of 'textual analysis'" (Kern, 2003, p. 43) and followed the general trend in scholarship on curricular models for FL programs by adopting a literacy orientation (Paesani & Allen, 2012). Goals for literacy-based curriculum and instruction are compatible with the concept of cultural literacy defined earlier and facilitate the merging of communication with textual analysis. Specifically, our literacy-based course sequence aims to develop students' ability to communicate effectively with others orally and in writing through interaction with French language and culture in authentic contexts of use (i.e., through various types of texts) and to understand how those contexts of use link to communication. This approach therefore facilitates students' interaction with textual content, including language, conventions, and culture, through collaborative activities that encourage interpretation, problem solving, and reflection (Kern, 2000; Paesani, Allen, & Dupuy, 2016).

Following the backward design model, the first stage in revising the introductory French program was to determine learning objectives that reflected the concept of cultural literacy and that corresponded to the goals of literacy-based curriculum and instruction. To socialize instructors into this process, they were introduced to the backward design model and completed workshop activities in which they analyzed learning objectives from existing collegiate programs grounded in the concept of literacy. They furthermore worked collaboratively to draft learning objectives over the course of several weeks on a Blackboard Wiki. These objectives were then critiqued and refined during a subsequent workshop. The result of this work was seven learning objectives (Appendix B) designed to develop students' cultural literacy. These objectives emphasize students' ability to communicate appropriately in a variety of contexts and modes, to recognize connections among language, culture, and texts of various genres, and to interpret, analyze, and explain the content they study in class. Formal accuracy and the ability to express feelings and opinions therefore play a less important role than they might in introductory courses grounded in communicative language teaching.

Before advancing to the second stage of the backward design model, we used the learning objectives from stage one to aid in selecting an introductory textbook consistent with our goal and objectives of developing students' cultural literacy through engagement with authentic texts. Although commercially available textbooks have long been criticized for a number of reasons, including their lack of meaningful and engaging content (e.g., Brager & Rice, 2000; Meyer, 2009; Rifkin, 2003; Swaffar, 2006), our decision to adopt one as the primary source of content was necessary for our context. Because our program includes a varied group of instructors, many of whom teach at multiple universities and thus do not have opportunities to collaborate regularly with their colleagues or the LPD, development

and implementation of in-house materials was impractical. Consequently, the LPD reviewed introductory French textbooks and narrowed them down to a short list of three that prioritized authentic texts and integrated study of language forms with exploration of cultural content. Instructors then reviewed these three textbooks using a collaboratively developed evaluation tool. The textbook we adopted received the highest ratings in ten of the eleven categories evaluated.¹ The textbook and accompanying workbook contain approximately 60 authentic written, audio, and audiovisual texts and 45 writing tasks representing a range of genres (e.g., surveys, description, poetry, fiction, personal narratives, etc.). Although the textbook evaluation results reflected overall consensus among the twelve instructors, there were two outliers who were less enthusiastic about the selected textbook. This variation in the results was addressed during stage three of the revision process.

Following the drafting of learning objectives and textbook selection, the next stage in the revision process was to determine acceptable evidence of having met stated learning objectives. To do this, we first analyzed our existing assessments to determine which, if any, aligned with our new learning objectives. We then brainstormed assessment tools that would more effectively measure each learning objective and reflect our literacy-based approach. To facilitate consensus building during this process, the LPD focused instructors on the connection between assessment and objectives and couched the discussion within larger programmatic issues and principles related to developing a coherent assessment plan. Following Kern's (2000) suggestions regarding valid and meaningful literacy-based assessment, we considered how assessments would link linguistic form and meaning, draw on students' knowledge of language, culture, and textual conventions, and integrate communicative modalities (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing). We furthermore wished to examine multiple perspectives of student performance through varied assessment tools and to ensure that how we assessed students would be consistent with and contribute to instruction. Finally, in determining assessments and their weight in relation to student grades, we considered which of our programmatic objectives were more or less important to our overall goal of developing students' cultural literacy and our instructional approach grounded in texts and communication. The result was six assessment tools, each providing evidence of multiple learning objectives from various perspectives. The table in Appendix C shows that each learning objective is evaluated by at least two assessment tools, and most objectives are measured by three or four assessment tools.

The assessments created for the revised course sequence provide formative (e.g., self-evaluation, compositions) and summative (e.g., online workbook, exams) evaluation of students' progress and represent both traditional (e.g., quizzes) and alternative (e.g., self-evaluation) forms of assessment. Of note is the format of oral and written exams, given at the mid- and end-points of each of the three courses. Although these are considered traditional assessments, they are not focused on discrete-point mastery of language forms. Instead, exams assess students' ability to communicate in French and to interact with the cultural and linguistic content of authentic written and audiovisual texts. These exams thus reflect the program's objectives and literacy-based approach, and are consistent with the focus of the textbook.

The third and final stage in revising the introductory French program was to create learning experiences that aligned with learning objectives and assessments. This stage was enacted over the course of two academic years, beginning with an orientation to the textbook and our literacy-based approach, and continuing with a cycle of classroom observations, communication among program participants, and teaching workshops. Several

strategies were key to the success of this stage of the revision process and to solidifying instructor buy-in. The first strategy was to address concerns that came up during the textbook review process to help instructors transition to its implementation in the classroom. Instructors were asked to reflect on the benefits and challenges of the textbook and to identify the support materials and teacher development activities that would most help them adapt to using it. The LPD used these suggestions as a guide for developing materials and workshops during the first two years of the revised program's implementation. A second key strategy was continued collaboration between instructors and the LPD. Collaboration was facilitated through regular meetings, discussions of classroom observations, interactive workshops, and a Blackboard blog and discussion board for posting questions and feedback related to teaching and assessments. Finally, we explored how to effectively employ and adapt the textbook to achieve learning objectives following our literacy-based approach. The textbook, therefore, was not the *de facto* curriculum, but rather one among several tools instructors used to implement the curriculum. Specifically, we prioritized engaging learners with textual content to go beyond surface-level understanding or decoding, on evaluating learners' performance based on their ability to interpret and express meaning related to texts, and on balancing the instructional focus so that texts were treated as an essential part of the curriculum that allowed students to use language forms in meaningful ways. Moreover, we focused on the importance of aligning classroom learning experiences with the various assessments students completed to ensure programmatic coherence. Although we do not adhere to a specific literacy-based pedagogy, our instructional approach reflects concepts from the multiliteracies framework such as textual interpretation and transformation, problem solving related to form-meaning connections, self-reflection, and meaningful use of language forms and conventions (Kern, 2000; Paesani, Allen, & Dupuy, 2016).

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND REFINEMENT

A key component of the revision project was an ongoing cycle of program evaluation, which began when we implemented the new course sequence in Fall 2013 and continued through Fall 2015. As the timeline in Appendix A illustrates, program evaluation overlapped with and informed adjustment of programmatic content, creation and revision of assessment tools, and fine-tuning of instructional practices, and was an integral component of the backward design model that framed the project. Data sources for program evaluation included midterm student evaluations; student performance data from quizzes, exams, self-evaluations, and compositions; classroom observation reports; and instructor feedback from the Blackboard blog and discussion board, professional development workshops, course meetings, and informal discussions. Throughout the evaluation process, the goal was to determine whether we were effectively developing students' cultural literacy. To illustrate this, a subset of data related to programmatic objectives focused on textual interpretation (i.e., midterm evaluations, written exams, instructor feedback) demonstrates how program evaluation informed curricular fine-tuning.

The first piece of data collected to evaluate the effectiveness of the revised course sequence was student midterm evaluations, administered during the first year of implementation. Two questions from the evaluations provided useful data for programmatic refinement: Students were asked to indicate (a) the degree to which course assessments contributed to their developing ability to meet course learning objectives and (b) which

assessments contributed to their developing ability to meet course learning objectives. Responses to these questions, summarized in Appendix D, reveal that, overall, students recognized that the work they complete in the introductory French sequence helps them meet stated learning objectives. Yet for question (a), students' perceptions of objectives related to textual interpretation (Objectives 2, 5, and 6) were less positive than those related to language use and cultural understanding (Objectives 1, 3, and 4). In addition, for question (b) there was a mismatch between the intended use of summative assessments and their perceived value by students. That is, few students associated quizzes and exams with their developing ability to meet the three textual interpretation objectives measured by these summative assessments.

That students perceived textual interpretation less positively than other learning objectives was supported by informal feedback from instructors, who reported that certain textbook activities were ineffective in engaging students with textual content and that certain texts were consistently problematic for students. Anecdotal evidence from instructors combined with student perception data, however, provide only a partial view of whether students were meeting learning objectives related to textual interpretation. We therefore examined student performance on midterm and final written exams to further measure program effectiveness. To illustrate, Appendix E provides exam scores for reading-to-write activities from exams in the third and final course of the introductory French sequence.² Activity types include general comprehension (Midterm, Activity F; Final, Activities F and G), detailed comprehension (Midterm, Activity G; Final, Activity H), pre-writing (Midterm, Activity H; Final, Activity I), and writing (Midterm, Activity I; Final, Activity J). Performance data from these activities, based on the first time each exam was administered (Fall 2014), reveals that on both exams, students received lower scores on writing tasks asking them to apply information learned through textual interpretation activities. Moreover, student performance on the final exam pre-writing activity was exceptionally low.

Based on data from these three sources, we made a number of changes to better meet our objectives related to textual interpretation. Starting with the syllabus, we adjusted daily course content to allow more time for teaching authentic texts. To accommodate this change, we took a "depth-over-breadth" approach and sacrificed some of the content in the textbook (e.g., author-created cultural vignettes, low-frequency grammatical forms) to prioritize textual learning. We also identified a small number of texts that were problematic across course sections and semesters from both teacher and student perspectives and eliminated them from the curriculum. For instance, during the first two semesters of implementation, students struggled with a literary excerpt from a biographical novel on the theme of childhood. As a group, we determined that the themes, language forms, and conventions of the text were not accessible to students and we eliminated the text from the syllabus.

A second programmatic change entailed revising written exams to better reflect our literacy-based approach and more fairly assess students' ability to interpret texts and apply knowledge gained through textual interpretation to writing activities. Specifically, data from midterm and final exams indicated we needed to better prepare students to write and more closely link writing activities with information gleaned through textual interpretation. In the case of the course exemplified in Appendix E, we eliminated the midterm exam's pre-writing activity because it was not well integrated with the textual content students had read. In addition, we changed the topic of the writing activity so that it more closely related to the information students had interpreted through reading activities. When the midterm exam

was re-administered, student mean scores on the writing activity were 9.57 (79.75%), an improvement of 10.58% over the previous semester. Likewise, on the final exam, we created a new pre-writing activity that provided more substantial linguistic support and established a clearer link between the text students read and the topic they wrote about. Student mean scores on the revised writing activity were 17.62 (88.10%), compared with 14.52 (72.60%) the previous semester.

The third change to the introductory French sequence resulting from program evaluation data was to adjust instructional practices to better reflect the goals of literacy-based instruction and thus more effectively meet learning objectives related to textual interpretation. Instructors were supported in this endeavor through a series of workshops during the 2014-2015 academic year. Topics covered included linking programmatic objectives with daily lessons, connecting vocabulary development and text-based teaching and learning, teaching reading, and selecting and adapting textbook activities. For example, two workshops on teaching reading and adapting textbook activities emphasized literacy-based principles such as interpretation, form-meaning connections, and creative production; these concepts framed our analysis and modification of textbook reading activities. The LPD modeled this work by presenting a pedagogical sequence for teaching interpretive reading adapted from the multiliteracies lesson plan template designed by Paesani, Allen, and Dupuy (2016, pp. 154–159). This sequence includes three phrases: (1) preparing students to read by providing a purpose for reading, tapping into students' background knowledge, and predicting textual content; (2) guiding students in the reading process through textual comprehension and interpretation activities, form-meaning connections, and reading strategies development; and (3) doing something with the information learned while reading through discussion, analysis, and creative production activities. The LPD used this pedagogical sequence to frame the analysis of an existing set of reading activities from the textbook that had been problematic for instructors and then to present a retooled pedagogical sequence. Whereas the original textbook activities focused on surface-level comprehension of facts, contextualized guessing, and exploration of personal opinions, the revised sequence encouraged interpretation of viewpoints presented in the text, comparison of French and North American cultural practices, and creative language production (see Appendix F for the revised sequence).³ Based on this model, instructors learned to how to analyze textbook activities and align them with lesson and program objectives, modify or eliminate activities that did not meet stated objectives, develop new activities to create a logical and coherent lesson, and more effectively integrate aspects of our literacy-based instructional approach. Instructors then applied this information to analysis and retooling of textbook reading activities they found challenging or inadequate.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The revision project outlined here puts into practice the department's overarching goal of cultural literacy, a concept that has gained ground in curriculum design, but has not been documented in a wide range of instructional contexts (Paesani & Allen, 2012). Adopting this overarching goal from the start of the project facilitated an approach to programmatic revision grounded in the backward design model: We were able to build the program from the bottom up, determine programmatic objectives and the tools used to measure them at the outset of the revision project, and plan appropriate learning experiences consistent with our literacy-based approach.

A number of implications arise from using a backward design model to inform programmatic revision. First, because backward design explicitly links learning objectives, assessments, and classroom activities, it provides stakeholders (e.g., administrators, instructors, students) with a roadmap indicating where the curriculum is leading. In addition, backward design facilitates instructor awareness of how a program is designed and why it is implemented the way it is. Not only does this provide instructors with tools that will serve them well when they design their own courses and curricula, but it contributes to buy-in throughout the revision process. This model furthermore helps avoid the problem of treating the textbook as the curriculum rather than as a resource, and of creating isolated classroom activities with no clear purpose in relation to learning objectives and assessment tools. Equipping instructors in the introductory French program with strategies for selecting and adapting textbook activities to help students meet programmatic objectives underscores this implication of the model and gives them the flexibility to express their personal teaching style. Lastly, backward design is enabled by an ongoing cycle of program evaluation, which underscores connections among the three components of the model. In the case of the introductory French program, instructors were consistently informed of results from program evaluation to build consensus and increase understanding of the rationale behind programmatic adjustments.

As of the writing of this article, program evaluation data continued to inform revisions of not only the introductory French program but also the undergraduate French curriculum as a whole. Based on student performance data and instructor feedback, we worked on more effectively engaging introductory-level students in extended oral and written discourse and adjusting grading rubrics to reflect this focus. More recently, the French faculty have used the overarching goal of cultural literacy to frame discussions about changes to the remaining three levels of the undergraduate major and minor. Following some of the suggestions provided above, the faculty began the revision process by determining learning objectives and then building a program that would implement those objectives from the introductory levels onward. For instance, to improve vertical articulation between levels one and two of the curriculum, the learning objectives from Appendix B informed objectives for the two intermediate-level courses; these new learning objectives will in turn guide selection of course materials that better reflect the department's cultural literacy goal. In addition, the faculty have used data from student focus groups and surveys to more deliberately attend to students' language development and interaction with authentic texts in the third level of the curriculum. These changes will then inform revisions to the more specialized courses in the fourth level. This is a long-term and ongoing process of curriculum revision that has not been without challenges. Because this curricular reform project is not led by one faculty member with disciplinary expertise in FL teaching and learning, as was the case with the introductory French program, but rather involves faculty on equal footing representing a range of disciplines, building consensus has been more difficult. Nonetheless, progress is being made, and through this process the French faculty hope to create a more holistic and coherent curriculum, grounded in the framing concept of cultural literacy, that responds to calls for change in 21st century collegiate FL programs.

NOTES

1. Evaluation categories were the following: layout; chapter themes; written, audio, and audiovisual texts; development of language competencies; presentation of new language forms; practice of new language forms;

language use; cultural content; online platform; introductory French program goals and objectives; and introductory French program approach.

2. On exams, reading-to-write activities move from comprehension and interpretation of a written text to writing about a topic treated in the text, writing a text or story completion, writing a reflection on one's reaction to the text, and so on.

3. The original reading activity and authentic text that form the basis of this work appear in the first-year French textbook *Mais oui!* (Thompson & Phillips, 2013, pp. 95–98).

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APPENDIX A

Program Revision Timeline

TIME PERIOD	STAGE	ACTIVITIES
October 2012-February 2013	Determining Learning Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops (2) • Drafting objectives on Blackboard Wiki • Revision and finalization of objectives
February 2013-March 2013	Textbook Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops (2) • Review of available introductory French textbooks • Creation of short list (three textbooks) • Creation of textbook evaluation tool grounded in learning objectives • Review of short-listed textbooks
March 2013-August 2013	Determining Assessment Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops (1) • Aligning assessments with learning objectives • Creation of course syllabus
August 2013-December 2014	Creating and Fine-Tuning Course Assessments and Evaluation Tools, and Revising Course Syllabi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops (2) • Exam discussion board • Course meetings • Instructor feedback
August 2013; September 2014-August 2015	Determining and Fine-Tuning Instructional Approach and Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops (5) • Classroom observations • Instructor share fair • Instructor feedback

August 2013-December 2015	Program Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student midterm evaluations• Student performance data• Instructor feedback• Classroom observations
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APPENDIX B

Student Learning Objectives

Upon completing courses in the introductory French sequence, students will be able to demonstrate their developing ability to:

1. create and use culturally appropriate language in oral and written contexts;
2. understand and interpret culturally appropriate language in oral and written contexts;
3. use a range of language forms appropriately and accurately;
4. understand cultural products, practices, and perspectives of the French-speaking world and relate them to their own culture;
5. analyze and interpret the cultural content of oral, written, and visual texts of various genres;
6. recognize and explain connections between language used in texts and the cultural information and ideas expressed in those texts; and
7. reflect on their own language learning processes.

APPENDIX C

Assessments

		ASSESSMENTS					
		Preparation, Participation, and Attendance (11%)	Self- Evaluations (4%)	Online Workbook (10%)	Chapter Quizzes (20%)	Compositions (15%)	Oral & Written Exams (40%)
LEARNING OBJECTIVES	1	√		√	√	√	√
	2	√		√	√		√
	3	√		√	√	√	√
	4	√					√
	5	√				√	√
	6	√					√
	7	√		√			√

APPENDIX D

Student Midterm Evaluation Results (n = 289)

<i>A: The assessments for this course have contributed to my developing ability to...</i>			
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree / Disagree
1. create and use culturally appropriate language in oral and written contexts	82%	12%	3%
2. understand and interpret culturally appropriate language in oral and written contexts	71%	17%	9%
3. use a range of language forms appropriately and accurately	75%	15%	8%
4. understand cultural products, practices, and perspectives of the French-speaking world and relate them to my own culture	73%	19%	6%
5. analyze and interpret the cultural content of oral, written, and visual texts of various genres	70%	20%	8%
6. recognize and explain connections between language used in texts and the cultural information and ideas expressed in those texts	68%	23%	7%
7. reflect on my own language learning process	71%	16%	11%

<i>B: Which assessments have contributed the most to your developing ability to do the following? Select all that apply.</i>						
	PPA	Self-Eval.	WB	Quizzes	Comp.	Exams
1. create and use culturally appropriate language in oral and written contexts	54%	6%	53%	31%	49%	28%
2. understand and interpret culturally appropriate language in oral and written contexts	52%	4%	55%	26%	44%	21%
3. use a range of language forms appropriately and accurately	48%	4%	56%	29%	53%	26%
4. understand cultural products, practices, and perspectives of the French-speaking world and relate them to my own culture	54%	5%	39%	19%	34%	20%
5. analyze and interpret the cultural content of oral, written, and visual texts of various genres	52%	3%	50%	24%	36%	19%
6. recognize and explain connections between language used in texts and the cultural information and ideas expressed in those texts	51%	5%	52%	27%	38%	22%
7. reflect on my own language learning process	44%	46%	42%	30%	39%	27%

APPENDIX E

Student Performance Data: Reading-to-Write Activities

FRE 2010, Midterm Exam, Fall 2014 (n = 99)

Activity	F	G	H	I	TOTAL
Points Possible	11	4	3	12	30
Mean	8.33 (75.72%)	3.61 (90.25%)	2.42 (80.67%)	8.30 (69.17%)	22.66 (75.53%)
Standard Deviation	1.43	0.86	0.67	3.44	4.08

FRE 2010, Final Exam, Fall 2014 (n = 95)

Activity	F	G	H	I	J	TOTAL
Points Possible	6	10	14	10	20	60
Mean	5.42 (90.33%)	9.34 (93.40%)	12.23 (87.36%)	5.46 (54.60%)	14.52 (72.60%)	46.97 (78.83%)
Standard Deviation	0.85	1.21	2.24	2.56	4.28	8.51

APPENDIX F

Revised Literacy-Based Reading Lesson

CONTEXT	Write an informational text for the magazine <i>Ça m'intéresse</i>
TEXT	“Ma maison, mon paradis,” informational text and table adapted from the monthly popular science magazine <i>Ça m'intéresse</i>
OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will be able to identify and discuss housing preferences in North American and French contexts. • Students will be able to apply textual language to the creation of their own informational text. • Students will be able to compare and explain North American and French housing preferences.

LESSON STAGE	ACTIVITIES
1. Preparing students to read	a. The class period before the reading is assigned, students work individually to complete a textbook activity asking them to identify elements necessary to making one’s house a paradise. Follow-up includes creating an overall class ranking of necessary elements.
	b. As a second in-class pre-reading activity, students look at the informational text and table and predict what their source is, what kinds of information each text will provide, and how the activity they completed in 1a will help them understand the content of the two texts.
	c. As homework, students skim the text to get the gist/main idea and complete a textbook activity in which they identify the main ideas of each text.
2. Guiding students through the reading process	a. Instructor warms up by reviewing the two text types, then students quickly compare their answers to activity 1c with a partner and explain why they chose the answers they did. Quick whole-class follow-up.
	b. Instructor reads the informational text using a Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA): Instructor shows the first two sentences, reads them aloud, and has the class predict what comes next. This continues with additional chunks of text.
	c. In groups, students complete a textbook activity to identify factual detail in the informational text. When they’re done, instructor projects answers and asks if there are any questions.
	d. In groups, students assign the facts presented in the table to the following categories: money, preferences, activities, house features. Follow-up involves creating a whole class categorization on board.
	e. In groups, students complete a textbook activity to

	<p>identify factual detail in the table. When they're done, instructor projects answers and asks if there are any questions.</p>
	<p>f. In groups, students complete a contextualized guessing activity from the textbook to help them understand key words without having to understand every word in the texts. Instructor circulates and checks answers; follow-up focuses on any questions students have.</p>
<p>3. Doing something with information learned through reading</p>	<p>a. Instructor projects the class ranking from activity 1a and the answers to activity 2c. In a whole-class discussion, students determine if the class opinion is similar to/different from that of the French and explain why these concepts might be similar/different across cultures.</p> <p>b. In small groups, students discuss the answers to activity 2e: Are the same things important to you? Where are there similarities/differences between your opinion and that of the French. What might explain these similarities/differences?</p> <p>c. Students write an informational text for <i>Ça m'intéresse</i> on the same subject, but from a North American point of view, using their answers to activities 1a, 3a, and 3b as a starting point. Students complete this as homework and share their texts as a warm-up for the next class period.</p>