

BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN FRANCE

IDENTIFYING A BILINGUAL
SCHOOL: BEST FIT FOR
YOUR CHILD

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A GLOBAL
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM:
THE INTERNATIONAL
BACCALAUREATE

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Cover Photo

Photo by Engin Yapici on Unsplash



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*Association régie par la loi du 1er
juillet 1901.*

AAWE is a member of FAWCO, an
NGO in Special Consultative Status
with the UN Economic and Social
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© AAWE March 2023



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Lessons in Bilingualism From the FranceAndUS Frontlines

Sports can serve as tools to bring people together, empower women and girls, work towards social change, facilitate conflict resolution, and much more. Yet sports are also a tool to aid bilingualism. For Americans in France, playing sports is one way to fast track learning French for doing so requires the ability to communicate with teammates, coaches, and officials, no matter how imperfect one's grammar or conjugation. Meanwhile, learning about language in sports by watching sports media and films, or following sports figures' social media platforms, can introduce different vocabulary and phrasings not formally taught in the classroom but used colloquially in everyday life. Lastly, whether as a participant or fan, sports can help foster a sense of community and belonging, which can help children thrive in another country, as lessons from the frontlines of the FranceAndUS project illustrate.

Most people think of Franco-American relations through the cultural prism of food, fashion, the arts, aviation, and tourism. That's why writers, artists, jazz musicians, dancers, fashion icons, and rock stars have long fostered people-to-people cultural exchanges. But today it's athletes, coaches, and others in and around the sports world at all levels who are bridging divides and helping to better inform French and American citizens about each other.

HISTORY OF FRANCO-AMERICAN SPORTS

For more than a century, Americans in France and French in the United States have played sports. In doing so, they've engaged in sports diplomacy – when the acts of diplomacy (communication, representation, negotiation) occur around the sports world. That's why the informal people-to-people cultural, technical, and knowledge exchanges that organically occur in and around the court are so powerful. Moreover, with the upcoming 2024 Paris Games, FIFA World Cup North America 2026, and 2028 Los Angeles Games on the horizon, as well as the 250th anniversary of the Franco-American alliance in 2028, the sporting ties that bind take on new light. To celebrate this milestone, FranceAndUS is building an archive of 250 Voices. Each Voice chronicles an individual's experiences—French in the

United States or Americans in France—through sports, a new way to tell the Franco-American story. In the process, the project illuminates how sports serve as tools for bilingualism and ways for Americans to thrive in France.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

First, being able to speak French on the sports terrain has long helped Americans to assimilate. Take the example of William H. Hunt, US Consul at St Étienne from 1906 until 1927, who used rugby to integrate and become a pillar within the local community. He became involved with Racing Club Forézien shortly after settling in the city and rose to serve as its longtime president. The club is a predecessor to today's Club Athletique de St Étienne (CASE). Shortly before his 1927 departure, one Stéphanois journalist wrote that the US Consul would be missed by those across the region passionate about rugby. "The oval ball is in its rightful place in St Étienne. This will be the glory of Mr Hunt having fought for so long with such dedication and selflessness¹."

Second, learning about sports and sporting histories in a second language can help foster bilingualism. The FranceAndUS's "Backgrounder" pieces, which provide context to the people, places, themes, and sporting disciplines mentioned across the project, are one starting point. Many are written in French, often by guest contributors with unmatched specialist expertise, and provide unique windows into the sporting scene in France and the United States. They also contribute to our understanding of interrelated issues, such as gender equality, education, and more. The three-part series on baseball shines a light onto how this classic "American pastime" was introduced and evolved in the hexagone, including how its increased popularity after 1980 led to the growth of women's baseball. Did you know: the first woman registered on Major League Baseball (MLB)'s international recruitment list was French teenage sensation Mélissa Mayeux in 2015? Similarly, the backgrounder on "American Football in France" unearths the story of Sarah Charbonneau, who in 2011 created the first French women's American football team, the Sparkles de Villeneuve St George; their successor team (the Molosses d'Asniere-sur



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Seine) has won all of the Challenge Féminin held by the French Federation of American Football (FFFA).

And finally, sports can help individuals of any age become more comfortable with themselves. Take the example of French international and WNBA player Gabby Williams. Born and raised in Nevada by a French mother, Williams was a star basketball player at the University of Connecticut, where she won two back-to-back national championship titles, then played professionally in the WNBA and Europe. But she notes that playing in France was a tipping point. "I was the most at ease that I had ever been up until that moment," Williams recalled of feeling at home in multiple ways.² Her French improved, there was plenty of family time, and despite being a well-known introvert who guarded her privacy, she began to come out of her shell. Williams learned about herself and France through basketball.

These are just some of the ways that sports can serve as a tool in aid to bilingualism while also providing opportunities to thrive for people of any age living abroad.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

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Notes

1. "Les Adieux du SFU à leur vénéré Président Monsieur Hunt," unmarked newspaper clipping, undated. Folder 88 Clippings—Mention of His Name, Box 5 Magazines and Clippings, William Henry Hunt Papers (Collection 55), Mooreland-Springarn Research Collection, Howard University, Washington, DC.
2. Krasnoff, Lindsay Sarah. "Voices: Gabby Williams," FranceAndUS, www.franceussports.com/voices/007-gabby-williams (Consulted February 14, 2023).