

## Lâche Pas —



## Don't Let Go!

by Jane Vidrine

South Louisiana is not an easy place to live. Hurricanes, heat and humidity, coastal erosion, bad roads, economic hardship, and poor education standings are just a few threats to our daily quality of life. Yet, cultural lifeways and traditions are fiercely vibrant and persistent here, even in the face of a highly destructive force from the past. In 1921, the Louisiana State Constitution removed all mention of school instruction in the French language that had been allowed in earlier versions “in those parishes or localities where the French language predominates” (Louisiana Constitution of 1913, Article 251, qtd. in Louisiana Language Laws). The 1921 Constitution’s Article XII Section 12 states, “The general exercises in the public schools shall be conducted in the English language” (qtd. in Louisiana Language Laws). This policy empowered public and parochial schools to punish and humiliate students for speaking French on school grounds. The message to Louisiana Francophones was that they were second-class citizens. Many who experienced this cultural trauma wanted to protect their young ones from the shame of appearing “less than” by ceasing to teach their children to speak French and other languages even at home. And often when a cultural language fades, so do associated traditions and cultural practices that bind people together—music, dancing, folklore, art, even cooking and home remedies. Although this kind of imposed cultural erosion was not unique to Louisiana French culture, the response was. At the

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About the image: Lâche Pas teacher Jason Harrington and Vermilion Parish Schools Arts Supervisor Madeline DeHart on KATC-TV Cool Schools with Lâche Pas musicians.

end of World War II, Louisiana soldiers returned home with stories of how their French language gave them advantages and helped them survive. Many were ready to shuck off the shame and revive Louisiana French language and cultural traditions, although a lot of damage was already done.<sup>1</sup> Thanks to activists who emerged from that generation, total cultural loss has been abated to some extent.

Louisiana Francophone cultural resurgence has been a half-century-long grassroots process fueled by South Louisiana people who believe it is important to maintain aspects of their culture that connect them to their past and make them proud of who they are: Louisiana Cajuns and Creoles. Even though the French language has faded for many, they have preserved cultural family ties and traditions at home. Cajun and Zydeco music and South Louisiana regional cuisine have become world famous since the cultural revival that began in the 1970s. Cajun Culture is a multimillion-dollar tourism brand, a major economic force in the region. Every town has its cultural festival and celebrations—the Breaux Bridge Crawfish Festival, the Rayne Frog Festival, the Festivals Acadiens et Créoles in Lafayette, to name just a few. Community-based cultural consciousness has been raised in South Louisiana. Several organizations have been established whose mission it is to preserve and promote Louisiana's Francophone Cultures—for example, [Creole Inc.](#), [Louisiana Folk Roots](#), [Vermilionville](#), and the [Cajun French Music Association](#). In recent years, youth camps and private music schools have taught many young people to become competent Louisiana French musicians in both Zydeco and Cajun genres.

Civic and governmental agencies were established to protect, promote, and teach the French language in Louisiana. The most influential of these is CODOFIL, the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, a state agency founded in 1968. CODOFIL's mission is to “support and grow Louisiana's francophone communities through scholarships, French immersion and various other community and language skill-building programs” (CODOFIL). French as a second language (FSL) classes were established in public schools throughout the state in grades 4-12. Unfortunately, 30 to 60 minutes a day exposure to standard French does little to revive an endangered regional language. The desire to further the possibility of bilingualism inspired the creation of French Immersion Programs some 30 years ago in scattered schools around the eight-parish region that locals call Acadiana. Immersion teaching starts in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten with the entire school day (except for English Language Arts) in the French language, including Louisiana French. Whereas French Immersion is only reaching a small part of the population, it has spawned a small but robust community of young adults who are not only competent in the French language but are also dedicated to protecting, strengthening, and interweaving Louisiana French into their daily lives. Some program alumni now teach in immersion settings. Others have seamlessly incorporated Louisiana French language and culture into their career and life paths. There is an expression, “Quelqu'un qui parle deux langues vaut deux personnes,” which means “Someone who speaks two languages is worth two people.” The young adults whose lives were informed by French Immersion have access to the Francophone world in general and have doors held wide open to the cultures of their own region. Their competency in French gives them a deeper insider view of Louisiana French traditions. With that understanding also comes an obligation to continue the trend for future generations.

Teaching Louisiana French cultural traditions in the K-12 setting has largely depended on individual teachers' creativity and passion for local culture. From an institutional standpoint,

curriculum on folklife topics has made cameo appearances in various editions of Louisiana Social Studies textbooks. Fortunately, an enduring, multigenerational cohort of committed, visionary teachers have found inventive ways to incorporate Louisiana Francophone traditions and culture into their classes in both French and English settings. Most integrated Louisiana culture into their required lesson cycles. One of the earliest examples was Catherine Blanchet, mid-20<sup>th</sup>- century educator and folklorist who collected French folk songs from her Vermilion Parish students and built lessons and community programs around them. She even established an alternative school in the 1970s with the Acadian Academy, a group of students who performed the Louisiana Acadian music and dances she had collected. Inspired by Blanchet, the next generation of FSL and English language teachers incorporated her work, creating danses rondes<sup>2</sup> performance groups and using Louisiana French folk songs to teach the language and traditions associated with the lyrics. Theatre pieces, poetry, and history units about Acadian exile and today's Cajuns were created by a cadre of culturally conscious ELA, French, Social Studies, and Gifted education teachers and presented in schools and community wide. French Immersion spin-off community music groups, such as Les Petits Amis formed by the author in the early 90s, have often been used to promote the concept of French Immersion to school boards and the public. A few music educators have incorporated Cajun and/or Zydeco music into their teaching situations. Louisiana French musicians have participated in arts-in-education programs bringing local music into schools. Early on, in the 1970s, school administrators rejected the notion of bringing Louisiana French music to schools, saying that it was “basse classe,” or “low class.” By and large this tide has changed, and now musicians presenting traveling educational in-school performances are welcome, for example, Terrance Simien's “Creole for Kids.” In other content areas, science teachers have incorporated the impact of coastal erosion on cultural groups such as the [Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribe](#) community of the Terrebonne Basin. [Louisiana Public Broadcasting](#) and its partner [Louisiana Digital Media Archive](#) have been committed to supporting educators with high-quality Louisiana arts, history, and cultural programming for over 50 years.

Interpretive centers and museums provide continuing support for K-12 folklife and local history education through field trips and professional development workshops. Their common missions include public education, promotion, and preservation of local cultures. The largest of these is Vermilionville, a living history museum opened in 1990, whose mission, exhibits, and programming focus on “Native Americans, Acadians, Creoles and peoples of African descent in the Attakapas [historical Louisiana Indian tribe and pre-parish regional designation] region through the end of the 1800's” (Vermilionville nd). Others include the [Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve](#) with interpretive centers in Lafayette, Thibodeaux, New Orleans and Eunice (currently closed); the [St. Landry Parish Visitor Center](#) with its monument to the Creole music pioneer Amédé Ardoin, and regular programming featuring contemporary Creole and Zydeco musicians; and the [Acadian Memorial and Museum](#) in St. Martinville with its commemorative Acadian Migration to Louisiana exhibit.

In the 1990s, [Louisiana Voices](#), a nine-unit online folklife curriculum was launched by the Louisiana Folklife Program of the Louisiana Division of the Arts, Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism directed by Maida Owens and the lead consultant Paddy Bowman. The original idea was to build lesson templates to encourage teachers to use technology with their students and to expose them to Louisiana folklife through resources, folklore articles, and the Louisiana Folklife Program's digital photo archive. The author was *Louisiana Voices*' Education Coordinator. For about four years, *Louisiana Voices* was embedded with technology training all

over the state, providing professional development workshops and a week-long summer institute in various locations. Once computer-based teaching became the classroom norm, *Louisiana Voices* remained a resource for educators with occasional workshops sponsored by the Acadiana Center for the Arts or Vermilionville. *Louisiana Voices* is maintained by the State of Louisiana and remains an extensive content and pedagogical resource. However, it has never been formally adopted by the Louisiana Department of Education as an official class or curriculum.

Folklife education in Louisiana is still driven from the individual teacher level. As awareness of the importance of cultural inclusivity increases, perhaps more educators will seek out existing programs, resources, providers, and cultural institutions who can support them.

### **An Educational Response to Cultural Erosion**

In 2022, [Vermilion Parish Schools](#) launched Louisiana Heritage Connections, affectionately called Lâche Pas, meaning “don’t let go.” The experiential elective class is exposing students to the rich world of Louisiana Cajun and Creole music, arts, language, and cultural history through hands-on learning and real-life, local cultural experiences.

So, what is new and different about Lâche Pas? What sets this project apart is that the project director started at the top and at the bottom at the same time. Her goals included creating a locally based class that met content and district administrative goals alike and was constructed in a way that it could be accepted and adopted as an accredited course by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE). After extensive communication and reporting, LDOE Director of Accountability Policy wrote, “participants can earn credit towards the Interests and Opportunities Index in School Performance Scores for their program participation...” (LDOE letter, 4/3/2023). In other words, 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students may earn high school credit for the course in categories of Arts, Extracurricular (culinary), or World Language by meeting the Interests and Opportunities Index indicators that correspond to the Lâche Pas class. Inclusion as a recognized course by LDOE may assist Lâche Pas to sustain and grow in Vermilion Parish and encourage neighboring parishes to replicate the class model and start Lâche Pas classes of their own.

Louisiana Heritage Connections is the brainchild of Madeline DeHart, Vermilion Parish Schools Arts, Music, and Foreign Language Supervisor. She secured a \$810,000 Reimagine School Systems Initiative Grant, a federally funded grant funneled through the Louisiana Department of Education supporting a three-year plan for implementing Louisiana Heritage Connections classes in Vermilion Parish middle schools. The purpose is “to encourage school systems to think big and to truly reimagine their educational programs in ways that are transformative for students, families, and parish communities” through actions like replication, expansion, rural collaboration, and school model innovation. Lâche Pas is thinking out of the box on many levels by creating this model for folklife education across the parish and the state.

### **Mission, Vision, Goals, and Sustainability**

#### **Mission**

The purpose of Louisiana Heritage Connections is to offer a general survey course in Louisiana heritage through the disciplines of music, art, dance, folklore, Louisiana history, language, and cuisine. This course cultivates curiosity for one’s roots among youth in Vermilion Parish, and in turn improves connections between students, their families, and the surrounding local community.



### Vision

Effect on students: The ultimate objective is to create lifelong musicians and artists who possess a profound awareness of and affection for their heritage and its endangered status.

Serve as a model: Teaching resources developed throughout this project are being made available to any and all school districts throughout the state as curriculum models for similar course offerings. The resources have also been endorsed by and shared with [Louisiana Music Educators Association](#) (LMEA) and the [Louisiana Folk Roots](#) organization.

Administrative goals alignment: The project aligns with the Vermilion Parish Schools systemwide mission to develop a closer connection with community, deepen parent involvement, and improve attendance.



Mardi Gras mask making.

### Goals and Sustainability

- Provide instruction in Cajun and Creole Cultures to 150 students parishwide by School Year 2024-2025 at 235 instructional minutes per week. Schools will be phased into the program gradually over three years.
- Provide meaningful interactions with a regional network of master artists, musicians, and historians by hosting visitors and field trips.
- Conduct staff development workshops to recruit and train prospective teachers and administrators and conduct regular professional development sessions with current teaching staff to ensure common outcomes.
- Maintain an Advisory Board of educators, academics, tradition bearers, and community stakeholders to ensure maintenance of high-quality content and pedagogy for effective implementation and sustainability.

### Support Superintendent's Strategic Plan

The after-school 9<sup>th</sup>-hour elective functions as an extension of the newly embedded French elective and French Immersion models installed at several schools and provides space and opportunities for students enrolled in these French courses to use and practice the French language. Moreover, it allows students who are not enrolled in the class to interact with the language and gain an invaluable connection with the culture of their own ancestors.

### Implementation Plan

Year I (2022-2023) pilot and planning/curriculum development for René Rost Middle School in Kaplan, LA.

Year II (2023-2024) replication at two additional middle schools—Erath Middle School in Erath, LA, and J. H. Williams Middle School in Abbeville, LA.

Year III (2024-2025) replication at remaining middle schools—Gueydan Middle/High School, Forked Island, East Broussard, and North Vermilion Middle School (tentative).



Jason Harrington teaching fiddle to a Lâche Pas class.

### Pilot Class School Year 2022-2023 Highlights

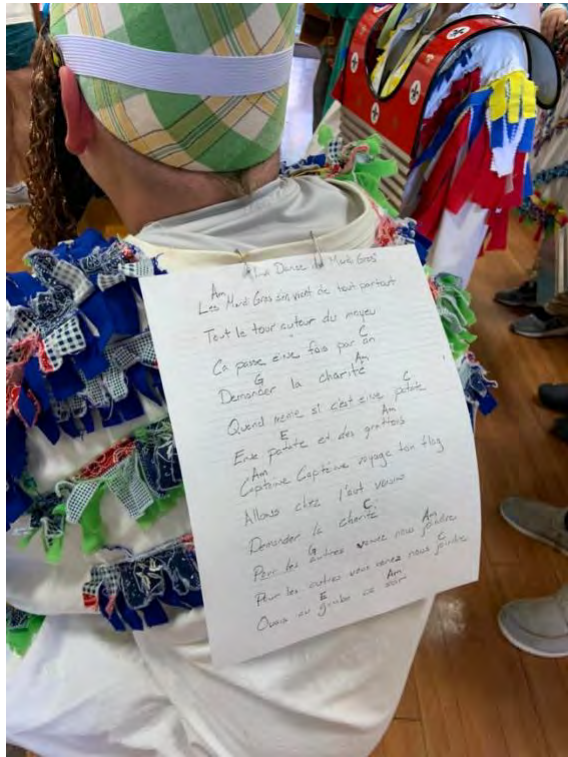
Piloted as an after-school 9<sup>th</sup>-hour elective for 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>-graders at René Rost Middle School in the prairie agricultural community of Kaplan, Louisiana, the class of 16 was taught by Jason Harrington, whose family is deeply rooted in Vermilion Parish. Jason is a degreed visual artist, musician, and songwriter whose “all day” job is Vermilion Parish Talented and Gifted music teacher. He also plays in a Zydeco band and a Cajun band and does solo gigs throughout Acadiana. Jason and Madeline were a team in planning and executing the many special projects for the benefit of the students, the school, and the community. Other project consultants who provided lessons, materials, and support were a public historian and author of *Creoles of South Louisiana*, Elista Istre; a Louisiana French Language specialist, Earlene Broussard; and myself, a folklorist, musician, and music educator. This teamwork between teacher, arts supervisor, and resource consultants assured the depth and richness of programming. Essential to the effort was the cooperation of community leaders, businesses, and school administrators.

The primary content focus of the pilot Lâche Pas class was on teaching Cajun and Creole music played on diatonic accordion, fiddle, guitar, vocals, ’tit fer (triangle), and frottoir (rubboard). French language, cultural history, and art lessons are interwoven to increase learning beyond the notes. Community tradition bearers, craftspeople, and artists are often invited to visit class to share their life-learned knowledge with the students and conduct activities with them. Adaptability to other schools and teachers with other interests and areas of expertise is key to Lâche Pas. In a different context, the focus could be changed to other folklife genres.

### Deep Dive

The Lâche Pas class dove right into the music, learning to sing and understand the French lyrics of the iconic waltz “J’ai Passé Devant Ta Porte” (“I Passed Your Door”). After only a few





Lyrics “cheat sheet” on the Mardi Gras run.

technique lessons on fiddle, students were playing the melody and rhythms by ear, supplemented by basic tablature to support the aural learning and to encourage home practice. The fiddles were purchased with grant funds from [SOLA Violins](#), the violin and luthier shop in Lafayette, LA. The students also learned all about the song—one of the first Cajun waltzes recorded in the 1930s by Joe and Cléoma Falcon—and all about the early days of recorded music. They connected with the song’s story about a young man who loses his sweetheart and learns about it when he comes to see her. In October, the Lâche Pas fiddlers performed “J’ai Passé Devant Ta Porte” and a classic fiddle two-step called “Mon Vieux Wagon” (“My Old Wagon”) along with Grammy-winning Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys at the Grand Reveil Acadien celebration of Acadian heritage in Abbeville, the Vermilion Parish seat. Community curiosity about Lâche Pas was piqued. Students learned what it takes to prepare for a performance and the feeling of playing music for a real audience.



Alan Broussard with Lâche Pas class.

Back in class, students learned a few more essential Cajun songs with the addition of ten handmade diatonic Cajun accordions from maker Junior Martin. One of their first tunes was the “Cowboy Waltz,” learned from early 1930s recordings of Dennis McGee, the distinctive old-style fiddler who played at home and all over the country until his death in the 1990s. The song tells of working hard with his horse to take care of the cattle. To bring in real-life context, a guest speaker who grew up on a Vermilion Parish cattle ranch shared memories of his childhood on the ranch. Although most of the students are growing up “in town,” several had family experiences in the marsh and in the countryside and could relate to Mr. Alan Broussard’s stories. He shared the history of early cattle ranching in Louisiana; a description of his great-grandfather’s ranch in Forked Island; and an explanation of what it was like to be a youngster on the ranch working alongside his father and grandfather to brand cattle, birth calves, and perform other chores. Students were particularly interested when he showed his grandfather’s handmade horse-hair rope and spurs, talked about cattle drives through

the marsh, and recounted the design and registration process for the Flying J ranch brand. Mr. Alan talked about his best friend Pancho, his burro. What really got the students' attention was when he cracked his grandfather's hand-braided leather whip! After his visit, the "Cowboy Waltz" lyrics "mon cable et mes éperons" ("my rope and spurs") took on a different level of meaning.

### Mardi Gras Comes to Class

The town of Kaplan considers itself the center of rural Mardi Gras celebrations in Vermilion Parish. However, in recent years, the traditional "chicken run" has been replaced by the more New Orleans-style float parade found in larger towns and cities. Lâche Pas project coordinators decided that the rural courir de Mardi Gras (Mardi Gras run) would be the focus for nearly four weeks of class—a realistic parallel to the actual Mardi Gras season. Preparations included learning about the rural Mardi Gras from primary sources, including video, written, oral, and photographic materials.

Students learned an adapted version of the Balfa Brothers' "La Danse de Mardi Gras" song on fiddle, accordion, guitar, and vocals. They designed and handcrafted traditional screen masks and capuchons (decorated pointed hats) with donated decorations from a mask maker who was retiring. Rural Mardi Gras celebrations are highly spirited house-to-house begging rituals to gather ingredients for a communal gumbo during mid-winter—historically speaking, the leanest time of the year when food needs were greatest. In this spirit, Jason Harrington and his students decided to ask local businesses for donations of canned goods that they could "collect" during their Mardi Gras "run" down the main boulevard in Kaplan. The students dressed in their handcrafted costumes, visited local businesses, played their Mardi Gras song for the people there, begged with the traditional "Donne-moi que'que chose!" ("Give me something!"), collected over 500 pounds of canned goods, and delivered them to the local food bank. Businesses demonstrated total buy-in and delight, and the mayor escorted the students, gathering the boxes of food on his decorated golf cart. A cultural purist may view the Kaplan middle school take on Mardi Gras as inadequate or incorrect. But if one takes the time to visit, observe, and participate in celebrations out on the South Louisiana prairies, one can observe themes and variations that make sense within the context of each community, assuring Mardi Gras



Young Alan Broussard on his best friend Pancho at the Flying J Ranch.



Lâche Pas students on their Kaplan Mardi Gras run.





Louisiana swamp painting with Klébé Meaux.



Mardi Gras mural almost completed.

as a living, transforming, relevant tradition. As such the Mardi Gras of these middle schoolers was not a pale reenactment, but instead, it was the real deal.

### Visual Arts Integration

Several community-based, Louisiana-themed art projects have been woven into the curriculum. The first was a Louisiana swamp scene painting project led by Klébé Meaux, a Vermilion Parish artist. This was followed by a model slab clay pirogue (canoe) project with great geometry connections. The students were quite proud of these and couldn't wait to take them home to share with their families after a school community exhibit. In the same semester, the students painted a huge mural designed by local artist Blake Broadhead. It resides in the hallway of René Rost Middle School, greeting students as they walk to lunch every day. Capitalizing on the success of the students' Mardi Gras project, another mural project is in progress on the side of Piazza Office Supply in downtown Kaplan. Funded in part by the Rotary Club of Abbeville, the mural design and execution are also guided by Broadhead.

### Outside the Classroom Walls

René Rost Middle School understands the value of the Lâche Pas and French classes and the administration supports a high frequency of activities beyond the classroom walls. Students take on the role of ambassadors for the school, the community, and the Lâche Pas program. They are encouraged to perform at other schools to recruit students for next year's class, play at community concerts and festivals outside school hours, and promote the program to a broader audience in the media. Students also took cultural field trips. The favorite was to Crawfish Haven, a working crawfish farm right outside Kaplan, for an immersive and tasty lesson in crawfish aquaculture.

### Year 1 Takeaway

It's been a year of diverse experiences for the Lâche Pas class. Students started in the fall knowing next to nothing about Cajun and Creole music and traditions and now most could talk your ear off about all the things they have learned and done. The side benefit is the camaraderie and insider knowledge that have developed among the students. It will be years before actual effects on these students become apparent in the decisions they make and paths they pursue as adults. One thing is sure, their cultural treasure chest is filling up with gems that they can be proud of as they look toward the future.

"Before I only knew a couple of words in French and now I know like two whole songs. It's like, I didn't know that I would be able to learn that fast." The student on their aspirations: "Maybe I'd start my own club to play the fiddle and teach lessons to kids."

"What made me interested to take this course was that I wanted to learn to play the fiddle. My grandpa would always bring his fiddle to the house to play—either the fiddle or the accordion—those were the two." -Student reflections

### **Curriculum Development/Method Books Using Primary Sources**

A team of six educators, folklorists, Cajun French language experts, historians, and musicians worked on developing a framework for present and future versions of Lâche Pas. Models for an in-depth, year-long class in a K-12 public school setting are scarce, with the exception of *Louisiana Voices*. Published traditional Louisiana French music methods with score and parts teaching materials are nonexistent although sources such as Ann Savoy's *Cajun Music: A Reflection of a People, Vols. 1 and 2* (Savoy 1984 and 2020) are excellent background resources. Cajun and Creole music have been passed along informally for generations, yet formal teaching of Louisiana French music is a relatively new phenomenon. Only in the past 10 to 20 years have a few master players begun to teach in a formal way through private lessons and camps. A clean slate such as this sparked creativity, soul-searching debates, philosophical and methodological discussions, and challenges for the curriculum writers.

The goal was to create a method book mirroring those found in band and orchestra programs to make it easy for trained music educators to teach using the materials even if they are not master Cajun or Zydeco musicians. Big questions presented themselves: Where to begin and whether to teach technique embedded in repertoire or as a separate entity? How far can you break down a song to its essential melody and structure without losing its stylistic characteristics altogether? At some point, simplification can take the soul right out of the music. What are the first songs that should be taught?

The Cajun, Creole, and Zydeco song bank is staggeringly huge and stylistically diverse. Moreover, a tune that may be easy for a beginning accordion player may present technical challenges on the violin and be better suited for the advancing player (e.g., the use of Lo2 fingering). Should teaching be entirely by rote, or should tablature be introduced, along with or only after learning by ear? Should standard notation be taught at all? And what about lyrics and the question of age appropriateness? Many Louisiana French songs contain adult-themed lyrics, more suited for the dancehall than for the classroom. Yet, there are so many more songs that contain beautifully poetic Louisiana life stories, rich with Louisiana French vocabulary and expressions. The pilot class has been a superb testing ground to work out solutions for some of these issues thanks to the resilience of the students and the teacher. Everyone knew they were involved in something new and different from other classes, so they worked together to get the best results possible.

The project team agreed to focus the music method repertoire on sources that reflected Vermilion Parish through its music, its musicians, and its ways of life—ranching, farming, hunting, fishing, living on the coast, social and family gatherings. A very long list of possible musicians and thematic songs was compiled. Unfortunately, in the course of a year, only a few songs could be learned. The task was to choose carefully for the most representative songs that could be taught successfully at the beginner and advancing student levels.

A flexible list of 20 songs was compiled, and a working rough draft of the Year-1 method book with 12 songs is soon to be unveiled. The songs are sequenced by successive difficulty for the three-year cycle of the class. Songs may be repeated and scaffolded to higher levels as some students remain in the class and new students enter the program during Year 2 or 3. Resolutions to many of the big questions have presented themselves in the process of transcribing the fiddle, accordion, and guitar parts to tablature and standard notation.

Contextual history and language lessons complement the music materials to deepen students' relationship with what they are playing. Subjects include Louisiana: A Cultural Gumbo, the Cajun and Creole Flags—symbols and meaning, Busting Myths about Louisiana Tribes, Cajun and Creole Notables, and Immigrant Story Interviews. An extensive, embellished glossary of Louisiana French vocabulary and phrases focuses on English-French cognates to facilitate French language learning through music lyrics, stories, and cultural themes.

In June 2023, the first five-day Lâche Pas Summer Teacher Institute was held at the pilot school in Kaplan. Music educators from the parish and guest teachers from surrounding parishes learned a sampler of Lâche Pas repertoire; how to play and teach beginning fiddle, accordion, guitar, 'tit fer, and frottoir; and how to dance to Cajun and Zydeco music. Teachers also sampled the Lâche Pas history lessons. Presentations by Louisiana French scholars and experts provided context for the music learning and sparked

Basic criteria were developed to guide decisions about what representative songs from primary sources and tradition to include:

**Songs recorded/composed by significant Vermilion Parish Cajun and Creole artists, historical and/or present day**, for example, “La Porte en Arrière” (“The Back Door”), by D.L. Menard, and “Soleil Est Proche Couché” (“The Sun Is Nearly Set”) from Inez Catalon, a Vermilion Parish Creole acapella singer.

**Songs related to traditional South Louisiana lifestyles and places in Vermilion Parish**, such as “Kaplan Waltz,” named for the town where the pilot class took place; “Mon Vieux Wagon,” a fiddle tune about going to the dance on Saturday night; and “Les Ecrevisses Dans Le Platin” (“The Crawfish in the Crawfish Pond”).

**Historical songs of Vermilion Parish from the work of collectors such as Catherine Blanchet, Irene Thérèse Whitfield, and John and Alan Lomax.** These include les danses rondes, old French round dances sung and performed during the Lenten season when playing instruments was considered taboo.


**Iconic, essential first tunes beginners can play successfully**, for example, the Cajun waltz “J’ai Passé Devant Ta Porte” (“I Passed in Front of Your Door”), by Joe and Cléoma Falcon, and the Creole La La old-style two-step “Quoi Faire” (“Why?”) from the pioneer accordionist Amédé Ardoine.



interesting reflection, feedback, and discussion about personal cultural connections and contemporary cultural issues. The valuable input from these educators gave direction for further edits to the Lâche Pas curriculum.

Lâche Pas, Louisiana Heritage Connections is a class template that honors the lineage of educators dedicated to assuring that their students are literate in Louisiana French cultures, music, and language. Lâche Pas is contributing by creating a replicable class model with momentum that is sustainable into the future and equipping young people to be stewards of their regional lifeways and traditions.

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#### Endnotes

1. See the documentary *Mon Cher Camarade*, directed by Pat Mire, 2009, <https://www.lpb.org/programs/mon-cher-camarade>.
2. Les danses rondes are acapella play-party songs practiced during the Lenten season when the use of instruments was not allowed in years past.

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