

Académie Lafayette is a kindergarten through eighth, French immersion, charter public school located in Kansas City, Missouri. The school was formed in 1999 by a dedicated and passionate group of teachers and parents. They wanted to improve educational opportunities for their children and knew that with hard work and perseverance, anything was possible. Over the last ten years, Académie Lafayette has proven to be a supportive, nurturing environment for almost 500 students.

Académie Lafayette benefits from a diverse student body representing the full range of socio-economic, racial and ethnic groups of the community. Our school population is 35% African American, 3% Hispanic and 3% Asian. Twenty-eight percent qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Académie Lafayette's mission is to bring together a diverse community of students and an international teaching staff to develop critical thinkers, global citizens and engaged learners through immersion in the French language and Francophone cultures.

Our teachers come from all over the world - Belgium, Cameroon, Canada, France, Senegal and the United States. They bring to the classroom, not only subject-area knowledge, but knowledge of other cultures, customs and views.

At Académie Lafayette, French is the vehicle for content instruction; it is not the subject of instruction. Kindergarten students learn to read, write and speak in French. The teacher does not translate and students are expected to learn through auditory and visual clues. At first, students are wide-eyed and confused. By the end of the first week, most children understand commands and by early fall are answering back in short sentences. The initial confusion gives way as second language acquisition opens doors to a bilingual world and multi-cultural environment.

Studies show that children who learn a second language during their early elementary years gain academic and social advantages as they grow older. They are more creative, better listeners and have higher-level critical thinking skills. These findings are reflected in the success of Académie Lafayette graduates; two former students went on to become their high school valedictorian, 84% are in college and 99% have graduated or are still completing high school.

In addition to outstanding student achievement, the school is a model of constructive parental involvement. To keep parents engaged, the school conducts an annual parent survey to measure whether the school is meeting expectations for academic standards. Administrators review the responses and make changes as needed.

Our school has grown so much that we are no longer able to keep up with the demand. Our building, which seemed spacious five years ago, is no longer able to accommodate all our students and our kindergarten class is filling up almost a year in advance. The success of our students, the dedication of our teachers and the leadership of our administration have made Académie Lafayette an excellent, public education choice for Kansas City families.