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Grant brings Arabic language classes to Missoula schools

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NEWS RELEASE

Sept. 15, 2009

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GRANT BRINGS ARABIC LANGUAGE CLASSES TO MISSOULA SCHOOLS

MISSOULA –

After a nationwide competition, the U.S. Department of Education has awarded a five-year, \$764,000 grant to Missoula County Public Schools to create a full Arabic language and culture program for area students.

A ceremony to announce the new program will be held at The University of Montana on Wednesday, Sept. 16. The event begins at 3:30 p.m. in University Center Room 331.

The grant will create the school district's first critical language program in collaboration with UM. A joint team of district and University personnel working under the direction of Alex Apostle, MCPS superintendent, and Mehrdad Kia, UM associate provost for International Programs, developed and wrote the grant.

Kia said program development will begin during the 2009-10 school year, with the first Arabic classes beginning in fall 2010. Ultimately, Arabic will be taught in MCPS' three middle schools and three high schools. At the end of the Arabic courses of study, MCPS seniors will be eligible to enroll in advanced Arabic classes at UM.

He said current MCPS language teachers will receive intensive training in Arabic, and by 2014 the program will include three full-time credentialed Arabic teachers developed from the ranks of MCPS teachers.

“This program is intended to serve as a critical languages model for other school districts in Montana and across the country,” Kia said.

Team members responsible for writing the grant were Gail Becker, Becky Sorenson, Michal Malouf, Debbie Lowe, Libby Oliver and Lisa Moser of MCPS and Khaled Huthaily, Samir Bitar and Otto Koester of UM.

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