



Highland Middle School has been awarded a highly competitive federal grant to provide an Introduction to Mid-Eastern Culture & Language course to Grade 6 students for the 2015-2016 school year. Only 23 grants were awarded nationwide. This is an exciting and unique opportunity for our students to expand their global citizenship and gain an authentic cultural awareness of a part of the world that has become increasingly vital in current affairs and business transactions. Arabic is currently the fifth most spoken language in the world, and is also one of the six official languages of the United Nations. According to the 2015 World Almanac, there are more than 237 million speakers of Arabic in the world, while other sources estimate that there are as many as 455 million.

Q: Who will be teaching the children, and where will the teacher stay?

A: The U.S. Department of State awarded a fellowship to Mohamed Kandeel to participate in the 2015 Teachers of Critical Languages Program (TCLP) here at Highland Middle School. Mr. Kandeel is a veteran exchange teacher from Egypt with 17 years of experience teaching English. He will be here to teach for a full academic year. He is one of a total of 23 teachers who have been selected from China and Egypt for participation in TCLP. Mr. Kandeel will be staying with a local Highland family for the duration of his assignment. Prior to arriving in Highland, Mr. Kandeel will be in Washington, D.C. receiving an in-depth training and orientation to the program expectations. A community liaison has also been appointed to help develop opportunities for broader cultural exchange with Mr. Kandeel within our town.

Q: Who initiated and provides the oversight for this program?

A: The Teachers of Critical Languages Program (TCLP) is implemented by the American Councils for International Education and is funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational

and Cultural Affairs (ECA). The purpose is to increase U.S. students' study and acquisition of world languages. The program was launched in 2006 and to date has provided fellowships in U.S. schools to more than 190 teachers from Egypt and China.

Q: What curriculum will be taught to students?

A: Over the summer, the building administration, building instructional staff, and the visiting teacher will collaborate on curriculum development. The visiting teacher will work closely with an existing Middle School instructor, who will serve as a mentor teacher. The intent of the course is to promote a cultural exchange and to pique interest in the Arabic language, which is currently the fifth most spoken language in the world. The course aligns with Middle School curriculum presented in Grade 6 Social Studies, World Languages, and Geography. It also builds on students' perspectives and supports the Highland Middle School's *Dignity for All* program. Cross-curricular units will also be developed in the areas of Social Studies, Home and Careers, Music, Art, Technology, and Physical Education. Students will attend the class every other day for a total of 20 weeks.

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Q: How will this course benefit my child?

A: The chance to study the Middle Eastern Culture and Language is currently a rare opportunity in the United States and will set Highland students apart. In addition to reinforcing the existing Middle School curriculum, the authentic exposure to a different culture provided through the course will help students broaden their perspectives, challenge them to question perceptions, and deepen their independent and critical thinking skills. These are all key skills needed for success in the global economy in which they will someday compete for jobs.

Q: Why did we choose to participate in a grant for Arabic?

A: Our schools' mission says, "In a Safe and Caring Learning Environment, we inspire students to make connections, think critically, and become productive global citizens who create legacies that make our community proud." The goals of this course support this mission. Arabic is currently the fifth most spoken language in the world. As one of the six official languages of the United Nations, the Arabic language has a prominent role in current political and business affairs. Given the turmoil in the Middle East, we rarely get to see perspectives beyond the images and stories portrayed in syndicated media. For our students to become successful global citizens, they need to develop a deeper cultural awareness of those from this part of the world. They need to be strong independent thinkers who are able to make informed choices. Expanding cultural awareness and breaking stereotypes is a key step on this important pathway to success.

Q: What is the cost? Can the program be sustained?

A: This program is fully funded by the grant for the 2015-2016 school year. A grant extension application will be submitted for a second

year of funding. Future decisions about the course will be made based on the success of, and interest in, the program, as well as on the availability of both financial resources and qualified teachers.

Q: Is this program taking away jobs from our teachers?

A: No. The current program is an elective that will not impact staffing levels. This is an enrichment opportunity for students, not a course requirement. After the grant funding for the program expires, it is possible that a long-term program would be developed, in which case the District would seek to hire its own teacher for the course.

Q: Does my child have to take this course?

A: This course is not a requirement, however it will be made available to all students entering Grade 6, schedule permitting. Parents with any concerns about the course should contact Principal Daniel Wetzel at 845.691.1080.

Q: Where can I learn more?

A: If you have any questions, please contact Principal Daniel S. Wetzel at 845.691.1080 or by email to dseyler-wetzel@highland-k12.org. Parents can also learn more and meet Mr. Kandeel by attending the Middle School Orientation on August 18 at 6:30 PM.