

Language In Motion: Bringing cultural experiences to local classrooms

Aaron Shotts

Thousands of local middle and high school students have been introduced to cultures and languages from over a dozen countries worldwide through Juniata's Language in Motion program. Established in 2000, Language in Motion exposes local students to both native speakers and students fluent in a second language. International students, students returning from studying abroad, upper-level language students and visiting language instructors share their cultures and languages through interactive presentations.

"It's opening the students' minds to the world," said senior Albert Bado, a presenter for Language in Motion.

Bado has given presentations on various aspects of his home country of Burkina Faso in West Africa. Presentations included family structures and his native language and culture.

Bado said, "The kids were very interested in it and I was amazed at how they learn things so quickly."

He also said that being a presenter for Language in Motion is a learning experience for him as well.

"It's an opportunity for me to learn about American culture," said Bado. "The students ask me questions. I ask them questions too."

The program's impact on school students is spreading to other colleges and universities as the result of a \$150,000 grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations. Received this September, the grant will be used to continue funding the program for the next two years and to expand professional development opportunities offered to teachers.

Additionally, Deborah Roney, director of Language in Motion and assistant professor of English, said that "a huge part of the grant is to replicate this program at other colleges."

Representatives from eight colleges and universities from several states including Iowa, South Carolina, Oregon and Texas attended a conference at Juniata on Sept. 14. These schools have joined with Juniata to begin building a national Language in Motion consortium. Roney said that some of the schools will have language programs up and running by the

spring semester and all should be going by fall 2007.

The program is also expanding internationally. Juniors Britta Jureckson and Elizabeth Cushman are currently studying abroad in Marburg, Germany, where they are working with Juniata alumnus Sebastian Wolff to begin a program there.

Linda Reilly, a twelfth grade English teacher at Huntingdon Area High School, has been involved with Language in Motion since its inception. She said that Language in Motion presentations can be incorporated into all classes.

"It doesn't matter what subject it is. It's cross-curricular," said Reilly.

Roney said that teachers often help the students develop presentations that coincide with their lessons.

"We try to match up the curricular needs of the teacher with the students' strengths," said Roney.

Presentations expose students to many aspects of different cultures including dance, clothing, food, family, language and world views.

"I use the students in Language in Motion as much as possible because our students have a very limited exposure to people of other cultures," said Reilly.

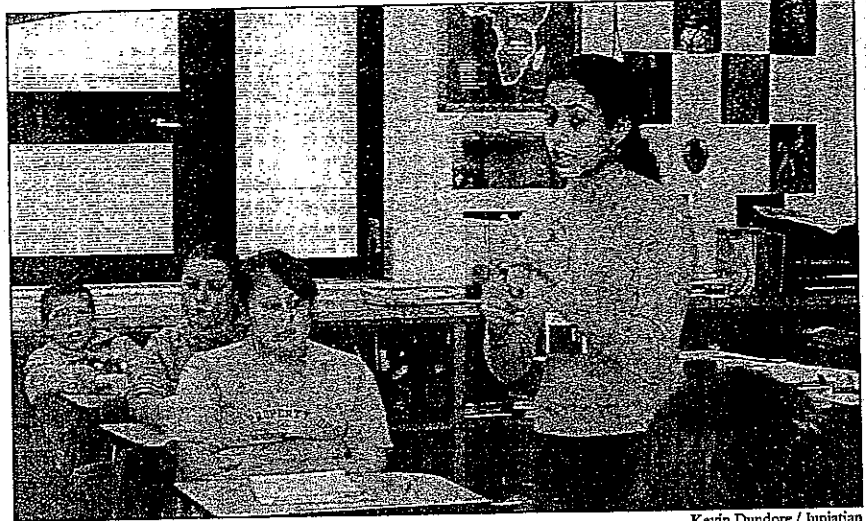
Reilly said that the program also introduces students to various religions such as Islam and Hinduism. Student presenters dispel myths and misconceptions regarding their religions and cultures, while sharing their own traditions.

"I encourage them to do what they feel most comfortable doing," said Reilly.

In addition to student presentations, Language in Motion hosts events on campus for upper level high school language students. These activities include learning about the campus in a foreign language and cooking food using recipes in foreign languages.

The Teachers Abroad program provides scholarships for middle and high school teachers to study at universities in Guatemala, France and Germany during the summer. Also, summer professional development workshops at Juniata provide teachers with training for teaching language and culture in their classrooms.

Language in Motion is offered as a one-credit service learning class or on a volunteer basis.



Kevin Dundore / Juniatian

Sophomore Bouchra Kachoub, an international student from Morocco, gives her Language in Motion presentation about Moroccan history and culture to ninth-graders at Huntingdon Area High School on November 9.