

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2008, the Missoula County Public Schools Board of Trustees approved district goals to address the needs of 21st Century learners. One of the goals focuses on professional development “to provide staff with best practices and expertise to make a difference for all students, regardless of their circumstances.” (Dr. Alex Apostle, Superintendent’s Message, August 2008)

Ongoing, job-embedded professional development builds a foundation of teacher excellence, a critical component to improving student achievement. Teachers must have not only extensive knowledge of world languages, but also deep understanding of how students learn world languages. Appropriate content and pedagogical preparation enables teachers to design lessons and implement curriculum using research proven practices and strategies in an environment where all students have an opportunity to succeed.

WORLD AND CLASSICAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Just as students must commit to academic study and achievement in order to be successful language and culture learners, schools and districts must make a commitment to have a successful world language program. The following goals are necessary to its development. Missoula County Public Schools will:

Goal One: Provide students with access to language and culture study that is integrated into the entire K-12 school experience.

Rationale: It is our firm belief that acquisition of a world language is a long-term process that should be part of a student’s educational experience from kindergarten through grade 12. Just as no one expects that a student learn all there is to know about English, math, social studies, science, or music in high school, neither should it be expected that students learn world languages without the time necessary to develop real proficiency.

Goal Two: Expand access in the study and development of proficiency in a variety of languages other than English.

Rationale: In an increasingly global society, it is essential that we have proficiency in multiple languages and have knowledge of their cultures in order to compete effectively in world economic markets. In addition, the civic, political, and environmental problems which face our nation are closely connected to those in other nations. The ability to communicate with and understand each other is essential for solving tomorrow’s problems.

Goal Three: Provide every student and teacher with rapid and efficient access to modern digital and media technologies.

Rationale: Access to authentic, current materials is essential to extend learning beyond the classroom. 21st Century learners are continually affected by a variety of digital technologies. Traditional instruction alone no longer provides students with all the skills necessary to acquire proficiency in a world language.

Goal Four: Expand its on-going professional development in digital technology skills and best practice language instruction for specific languages.

Rationale: In a rapidly changing world, world language professionals must constantly update their knowledge of technology and content matter to effectively guide student learning.

Goal Five: Encourage and validate teacher travel, with or without students, by offering efficient and readily available means of obtaining professional growth and development credit.

Rationale: The teaching of a world language is unique in its professional development needs. The district must treat travel for language teachers differently from other disciplines when considering professional growth credit. To simply retain your skills as a language teacher, it is essential to immerse yourself in the language and culture. World travel also facilitates obtaining authentic materials and experiences crucial for maintaining highly qualified staff. There is no better professional development for a world language teacher than world travel.

Goal Six: Recognize students who come to school from non-English language backgrounds and provide opportunities to develop further proficiencies in their heritage language.

Rationale: Because heritage language instruction and support are provided, students are able to further develop their bilingual proficiency both in their heritage language and in English. This support also provides all students and the community with additional opportunities for cultural connections.