Beginning at 8:30 a.m., students participated in cultural and language immersion sessions such as Chinese calligraphy, modern Turkish dance, basic Kiswahili, the Peace Corps, Spanish tongue twisters, and job opportunities for linguists with government agencies.

“World Languages Day is a great event because it exposes students to languages and cultures that are not usually part of a high school curriculum,” said Joy Campbell, chairperson of the World Languages Day committee and executive associate director of the Center for Language Education and Research. “For example, a student might have a session on French slang or German poetry, but then go to a 50-minute crash course in Swahili or Korean. It gives participants a glimpse of a much larger world — one that we make available through MSU’s language courses and study abroad programs.”

Thanks to campus sponsorships — which this year exceeded expectations — the event continued to be free to participants. Campbell said most promotion among high schools was through word-of-mouth and the Michigan World Language Association, and, because of their success, there was a waiting list.

Students were allowed to choose from some 90 sessions taught by MSU faculty and guest speakers. The sessions were designed to explore language and culture in different and entertaining ways. Some of this year’s offerings included: “The Daring, the Brave, and the Bold: A Look at Japanese Game Shows”; “La Pizza Napoletana: The History and Language of Pizza;” “Michigan Facts and Fun in English and Ojibwe;” “Songs from Latin America and Spain;” and “Bongoflava: Hip Hop Music of Swahili-speaking East Africa.”

Parents toured the campus and learned about admissions, financial aid, student life, language education and international study. They also observed student sessions. Teachers attended sessions on how to incorporate languages and cultures into their classrooms and learn about the latest techniques in language pedagogy from MSU faculty members.

CAL’s ‘World Languages Day’ offers language and culture immersion

More than 700 students, teachers and parents from dozens of Michigan high schools packed into Michigan State University’s Eli Broad College of Business on Saturday, April 17, 2010 to participate in the university’s sixth annual World Languages Day. This year’s event offered the most sessions, engaged the most MSU faculty, and drew the largest crowd in the event’s six-year history.