College of Arts and Letters CeLTA Language School (CLS) Director Angelika Kraemer and other CLS staff members recently embarked on a 160-mile field trip (round-trip) to southeastern Michigan with seven of MSU’s 2013-14 Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTAs).

The FLTAs visited the John R. King Academic & Performing Arts Academy on Detroit’s near north side to impart knowledge and promote understanding of their home countries’ languages and culture to the school’s students as part of a program partnership between MSU and Detroit Public Schools (DPS).

Kathy Woods, English teacher and the intervention specialist at John R. King, who works with middle school students in sixth through eighth grades and has worked at the school for five years, is highly enthusiastic about the program’s outcomes.

From upper left and clockwise, the seven MSU Fulbright FLTAs, their home countries and languages are: Feruza Tadjibaeva, Uzbekistan/Uzbek; Abdullahi Isa, Nigeria/Hausa; Olusesan Ogunyoye, Nigeria/Yoruba; Ayoub Msuya, Tanzania/Swahili; Alexandre Batista, Brazil/Portuguese; Darshini Nadarajan, Malaysia/Malay; and Ahmed Al Suleimani, Oman/Arabic.

Seven MSU Fulbright FLTAs
Open Doors to Different Worlds for DPS John R. King Students
Speaking about CLS and the FLTAs coming to John R. King, Woods says it “is like a door opening to different worlds and different countries, and we love it. The students love it, and the staff love it. And I think it’s teaching the students how to become global citizens; just introducing them to different languages and countries.

“This experience is special for our students because it’s like taking a journey; it’s like a fantasy for them. They’re able to get out of their neighborhood, and journey to different countries...because a lot of our students only know their own neighborhoods. This is very special for them, and they’re very excited about that.”

MSU’s FLTAs were excited about the opportunity to teach, too, and they all felt the experience was one of the best and most valuable they’ve had in the Fulbright program.

The seven FLTAs, their home countries and languages included Ahmed Al Suleimani, Oman/Arabic; Ayoub Msuya, Tanzania/Swahili; Abdullahi Isa, Nigeria/Hausa; Alexandre Batista, Brazil/Portuguese; Darshini Nadarajan, Malaysia/Malay; Feruza Tadjibaeva, Uzbekistan/Uzbek; Olusesan Ogunyoooye, Nigeria/Yoruba.

Woods says what she hopes the students took away from the experience was the desire to further engage with different languages; partake in or maybe take a language class like Spanish or Japanese, or perhaps fan their interest in learning a different language.

As for words to describe the day’s experience, the JRK teacher replied: “Exciting. New. Engaging.”

Fourteen-year-old John R. King honors student Destiny Shazor agreed, and said, “For me, I think, it’s a learning experience. Learning about different languages. For instance, today I learned that ‘blue’ in Malay is ‘biru.”

She noted that what the teachers wore was particularly interesting, “…because it’s a totally different way than we dress here. And the way they have to cool off, too.”

Destiny added that, to her, the visit was “…a way for a new experience in life.”

As for what the partnership says about MSU and the university assuming the role of global citizen, teacher Woods was equally forthright.

“I think this partnership communicates that MSU sees the need for opening the doors to different languages and cultures, and we really appreciate that you are taking the time to come in and to open those doors for our students.”

ABOUT CELTA AND CLS

Since 2002, the language departments at MSU have offered community-based language and culture outreach programs on campus and at area schools. The programming has expanded over the years to include a variety of programs for pre-K-12 students as well as professional development opportunities for K-16 teachers. In 2008, the College of Arts and Letters officially launched the CeLTA Language School (CLS) as part of the Center for Language Teaching Advancement (CeLTA). All programs are organized and conducted by MSU faculty members, graduate students, advanced undergraduate students, and community members.

The CLS program goals include: create awareness among schools and parents about the importance of early language acquisition and appreciation of other cultures; introduce children to language learning and encourage at least minimal language proficiency; promote cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity; offer alternative learning and teaching opportunities; provide a training venue for pre- and in-service teachers and those who seek practical applications for their futures in foreign language teaching; and offer alternative ways to use language for community volunteers.