

August 2008

Salaam `aleykum!

This is our fourth occasional “salamat” letter. It’s hot and miserable in Washington, DC, but we continue to be energized by the information and reports we receive about the growing field of Arabic K-12. There are so many activities and programs taking place and plans being put into place that it is not quite possible to list them all.

*Increase in the number of schools that are teaching Arabic.* We continue to be amazed at the number of public schools that are instituting Arabic language programs for their academic year. In Montgomery County, Maryland, two more schools will be offering Arabic in addition to Springbrook High School. Chicago has added more programs. Fairfax County has instituted an innovative program that includes online learning. Ohio is working on instituting Arabic programs across the state, modeled after their Chinese program. Other programs are now to be found in Kansas, South Carolina, Tennessee, Schenectady, to name a few more places. Some of these programs have received some media attention and we will list the URLs at the end of the letter in case you would like to read about them, along with some other articles. As of this writing, we have 138 schools identified in the U.S. that are teaching Arabic as a core language, and 33 of those are public schools.

Intensive and semi-intensive Arabic language summer programs have also increased. There are sixteen STARTALK teacher programs taking place this summer in addition to the nineteen STARTALK student programs and multiple lesser-known programs of other organizations.

*Increase in the number of programs offering teacher training.* Needless to say, the need to professionalize Arabic K-12 continues to be urgent. Many of us are competent Arabic speakers and many of us have taught Arabic, but meeting the needs of students in American classrooms has proved daunting at times. As we all know, the largest effort to meet this need has been through the STARTALK program. As we stated, sixteen teacher institutes of various lengths are taking place across the country this summer. The National Foreign Language Center will compile the results of these institutes at the end of the summer. In the meantime, if you haven’t already looked at the list of programs, go to <http://startalk.umd.edu/program-info/2008/Arabic>. Quite a number of them offered credit for the training. This, of course, is our next big challenge. Some institutions have already established programs to offer degrees in teaching Arabic as a foreign language (TAFL), and others are negotiating through their state and district bureaucracies to create certification venues for their Arabic language teachers, including one program that plans to offer its training online. New York State convened a meeting in late May to discuss language certification issues for selected languages, among them Arabic.

The subject of certification is a bit of a complicated maze since requirements vary from state to state. We have national learning standards but we have to agree on national teacher standards and see how they would fit into state and district requirements. We will try to put together as much information as we can about certification as we can for a future letter.

*Curriculum and materials are being developed.* As programs have begun to adopt the national standards, they are also beginning to develop curricula. As we all know, this is not a quick or inexpensive undertaking. Pioneers, such as Antoine Mefleh in Minnesota, provided an example for standards-based curriculum: [http://roosevelt.mpls.k12.mn.us/Arabic\\_classes.html](http://roosevelt.mpls.k12.mn.us/Arabic_classes.html). Secondly, the Fairfax Public Schools in Virginia, have written a curriculum for four levels of Arabic. This curriculum will soon be available on their website within a few days/weeks: <http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/OHSICS/forlang/index.htm>.

Also, in the past year, Michigan State University and the Dearborn Public Schools have been working on developing a middle school and secondary school curriculum which will be posted and available in the very near future. Also available soon will be an elementary curriculum from the Dearborn Public Schools that was developed under another grant. California Public Schools will also make their Arabic curricula available in the near future, and we'll update you when any of these are posted.

As for language learning materials, no doubt there are many of you who are creating interesting and usable materials. Although we are sure there are others, one published textbook has been brought to our attention. *Exploring Arabic*, by Hisham Khalek, a textbook with teacher's guide, Symtalk symbol cards, overhead transparencies and a work book have been published by EMC Publishing (St. Paul, MN, 800-535-6865).

Another new resource is a DVD for learning Arabic Alphabet: *Alif is for Asad*, published by Astrolabe LLC. With catchy songs and colorful graphics Alif is for Asad teaches and reinforces the correct identification and pronunciation of the letters in the Arabic alphabet.

Please let us know about any new publications.

*Conferences.* The first National Arabic Language Conference in Chicago in June was a huge success, clearly addressing a felt need. To see a list of the presentations and discussions, go to <http://condor.depaul.edu/~mol/anc>. There are plans to publish proceedings from the conference. Stay tuned!

We would like to congratulate Muhammad Eissa. His presentation at the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in March of this year on "Arabic Standards in Action: Ways of Classroom Applications" was one of the finalists for the "Best of Northeast" award. This is a pretty stiff competition, so being a finalist is quite an honor.

*Arabic in the media.*

**Look Who's Talking. Learning Arabic is a struggle but a chance encounter with a stranger makes it worthwhile. By Yael Bellin. *The Jewish Week*. 06/05/2008.**

[http://www.thejewishweek.com/viewArticle/c35\\_a12110/Fresh\\_Ink\\_for\\_Teens.html](http://www.thejewishweek.com/viewArticle/c35_a12110/Fresh_Ink_for_Teens.html)

**A School Stepped in Tolerance Adds a Course That Tests It. By Susan Dominus. *The New York Times*. 06/20/2008.**

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/20/nyregion/20bigcity.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/20/nyregion/20bigcity.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

**New Britain Delegation Presents Foreign Language Students With a New Chance to Earn Credit. Press release. <http://www.senatedems.ct.gov/pr/defronzo-080606.html>**

**Students Absorbing Arabic Culture. By Debbie Pfeiffer. *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*. 7/22/08. [http://www.dailybulletin.com/ci\\_9964584](http://www.dailybulletin.com/ci_9964584) (program run by HADI's STARTALK workshop in San Bernadino)**

Finally, we wish to inform you that our dear NCLRC research assistant, Salima Intidame, is now a proud mother of a baby girl. Salima will continue to work with the NCLRC on a part-time basis.

Please keep sending us information about your activities. Visit our Web site at [www.arabick12.org](http://www.arabick12.org) for updates on resources, and keep up the good work.

Dora Johnson  
Catharine Keatley  
Michael Greer  
Mary-Claire Peroutka