



### **Introduce Arabic Language Instruction in Illinois' Public High Schools!**

**Background:** Arabic language, and other languages including Mandarin and Russian, have been designated as critical languages as part of the National Security Language Initiative. The Initiative is a joint effort of the Secretaries of State, Education, and Defense and the Director of National Intelligence to dramatically increase the number of Americans learning, speaking, and teaching critical need foreign languages, as a matter both of national security and global competitiveness.

The Initiative is backed by federal money for language instruction, chiefly Foreign Language Assistance Program ("FLAP") grants and StarTalk grants for summer programs. Illinois is startlingly under-represented among FLAP grant recipients to date in spite of its large and diverse Muslim and Arab population.

Learning Arabic will provide a competitive advantage to our students and open many doors for them for employment in business, Commerce, trade, State Department and Law Enforcement agencies.

#### **Why learn Arabic?**

#### **10 great reasons to start learning Arabic**

Are you considering learning Arabic? But you are not sure why it might be beneficial? In addition to the reasons why everyone should learn a language, here are 10 solid reasons why Arabic might be an excellent choice for you.

##### **1. Arabic is the 5th most commonly spoken native language in the world.**

Arabic is the official language of over 20 countries and there are well over 300 million native speakers of the language. These speakers are largely concentrated in the Middle East, but there are minority groups of native speakers throughout the world. It is also an official language of the United Nations, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Conference, and the African Union.

##### **2. Arabic is the liturgical language of Islam.**

In addition to the millions of native speakers, many more millions know Arabic as a foreign language, since as the language of the Qu'ran, it is understood by Muslims throughout the world.

##### **3. There is a high demand and low supply of Arabic-speakers in the Western world.**

Relatively few Westerners ever venture to learn Arabic. With the growing importance of the Middle East in international affairs, there is thus an extreme shortage of workers in the West who are versed in Arabic language and culture. Those who study Arabic can find careers in a variety of fields: journalism, business and industry, education, finance and banking, translation and interpretation, consulting, foreign service and intelligence, and many others. Only 1 % of the United States 12,000 FBI agents have any knowledge of Arabic at all, and this includes those who know only a few words.

##### **4. There are financial incentives for learning Arabic.**

The US government has designated Arabic as a language of strategic importance. The National Strategic Language Initiative instituted in 2006 promotes the learning of Arabic (and other languages deemed critical) among Americans through numerous scholarships and supported learning opportunities. These include support for language courses from beginning to advanced levels, study abroad programs, intensive instruction opportunities, teacher exchanges, and professional development.



### **5. Arabic-speaking nations are a fast growing market for trade.**

Initiatives to integrate the Arab world into the global economy are opening up numerous potential new business opportunities. The Arab region with its rapidly growing population provides a huge export market for goods and services. With a GDP of over 600 billion dollars annually, the region also has much to offer the world market. In order to do business effectively, one must understand the language and culture of the people with whom one hopes to negotiate and conduct trade.

### **6. Arabic-speaking peoples have made significant contributions to world civilization.**

While Europe was experiencing the relative intellectual stagnation of the Middle Ages, the Arab-Islamic civilization was at its zenith. Arabs contributed a great deal to the advancement of science, medicine, and philosophy. Much learning from the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine cultures was preserved for the world through the Arab libraries. Arabs have also made significant contributions in such areas as literature, mathematics, navigation, astrology, and architecture. Knowledge of Arabic enables the exploration of this vast body of knowledge in their original language.

### **7. The Arab-speaking world has a rich cultural heritage.**

The Arab world has its own unique art, music, literature, cuisine, and way of life. Westerners know about belly dance, perhaps have read 1001 Nights, and may have tried some popular Middle Eastern dishes such as hummus or falafel, but Western exposure to the Arab way of life is generally limited. In exploring the Arabic world, you will learn to appreciate its distinct cultural products and practices and you will come to understand some of the values important to the Arabic people, such as honor, dignity, and hospitality.

### **8. Knowing Arabic can promote intercultural understanding.**

In addition to having limited exposure to real Arabic culture, Westerners are presented with one-dimensional negative stereotypes of Arabic-speaking peoples through the news media, Hollywood films, and other sources. At the same time, events in the Middle East affect our daily lives. Reliance on such false and superficial images can lead to mistrust and miscommunication, to an inability to cooperate, negotiate, and compromise, and perhaps even to military confrontation. Those who learn Arabic gain deeper insights into the cultural, political, and religious values that motivate people in those cultures. People who know Arabic can negotiate the cultural and linguistic gap between nations, assist in solving and avoiding intercultural conflict, and help businesses successfully engage in international trade.

### **9. Arabic influence is evident in many other languages.**

The export of concepts, products, and cultural practices from Arabic-speaking peoples is evident in the vocabulary that Arabic has lent other languages. Algebra was invented by Arab mathematicians in medieval times. Such staple products as coffee and cotton came from the Arab world, as well as jasmine, lemon, and lime. Other Arabic loanwords appearing in English denote such diverse things as henna, macramé, lute, mattress, gerbil, sorbet, safari and muslin. The influence of Arabic culture is apparent not only in the English language. Numerous Arabic contributions are also discernible in Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, Spanish, Swahili, Urdu, and other languages.

### **10. The United States has an Arab-American minority.**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2002 census, there are 1.2 million people of Arab heritage residing in the United States. Though a relatively small population, their numbers are quickly growing; people of Arab ancestry in the U.S. increased by about 40% during the 1990s. Intercultural understanding begins at home. Even just a basic knowledge of the Arabic language and culture can improve understanding and acceptance of this often misunderstood and misrepresented group of Americans.

Why learn Arabic was downloaded on 5/14/09 from

[http://www.vistawide.com/arabic/why\\_arabic2.htm](http://www.vistawide.com/arabic/why_arabic2.htm)



## **Push for Public Education Funding Reform – All Kids Deserve A Good Education**

### **Background:**

Why We Need School Funding Reform in Illinois NOW!

In Illinois public education is not equal. Those who are blessed to live in areas where property values are high have better funded public schools than those live in areas where property values are low.

Although the Illinois constitution requires the State to Illinois to provide the majority of public school funding, the reality is that it actually provides less than 1/3 of the total public school funding! The rest of the money comes from local property taxes. The result: rich neighborhoods get the well funded schools and the poor neighborhoods get under-funded schools.

All of Illinois' public school students should be treated equally. The quality of education cannot and must not be predicated on economic wealth! We need to stand up and fight public education funding reform now!

---

Read the FAQ on Illinois Public Education Funding Reform from the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability

<http://www.ctbaonline.org/All%20Links%20to%20Research%20Areas%20and%20Reports/Education/WE%20NEED%20SCHOOL%20FUNDING%20REFORM%20IN%20ILLINOIS%20NOW.pdf>

Read about a similar citizen lobbying effort by Protestants for the Common Good in Illinois

[http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/515/petition.jsp?petition\\_KEY=1848](http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/515/petition.jsp?petition_KEY=1848)

To learn more about Illinois public education in general visit A+ Illinois

<http://www.aplusillinois.org/issues/facts.asp>



## Opposing Online Gambling in Illinois

**Background:** Why Online Gambling is Bad for Illinois!

Illinois is considering a law that would allow online gambling. This is a bad idea. Gambling is addictive. According to the National Council on Problem Gambling's March 2003 study, approximately 2 million Americans are compulsive gamblers and another 4 to 6 million Americans very serious gambling problems. A study reported in American Family Physician (February 2000) found that a major depressive disorder is likely to occur in 76 percent of pathological gamblers! A 2002 gambling treatment programs evaluation by Dr. Thomas L. Moore found that 10 percent of gamblers enrolled in treatment programs considered and formulated plans to commit suicide. Allowing gambling to expand onto the internet just makes it that much easier for people to engage in this risky and dangerous behavior. Making gambling available online also makes gambling more accessible to children and teenagers.

**Check out :** [http://www.ilcaaap.org/addiction\\_information/profile\\_of\\_juveniles.php](http://www.ilcaaap.org/addiction_information/profile_of_juveniles.php) for additional information on gambling such as the article below.

### Profile of Juveniles Reporting Serious Gambling-Related Problems

**Age of Onset** - Begin gambling well before age 12.

**Gender** - Boys dominate about 3 to 1 over girls.

**Parental Gambling** - Growing up in a home where parents gamble, especially when one or both are perceived by the child to gamble excessively.

**Regional Differences** - More likely to live in a metropolitan area.

**Games Played** - Preference for rapid, continuous and interactive games. These include video arcade games, card games like poker, games of personal skill like bowling or pool, sports betting, and machine games in and out of a casino.

**Sources of Gambling Money** - Use of lunch money, selling of personal belongings, "borrowing" someone else's property (without their knowledge), utilizing bank or credit cards, stealing or other illegal means. They are more likely to work in part-time jobs.

**Fellow Travelers** - More extensively involved in frequent and heavy use of alcohol and psychoactive drugs, illegal activities with the law, poorer school performance, and more truancy. Few acknowledge or seek help for gambling-related problems.

**Reasons Given for Gambling** - Seek excitement; to win money; because I'm good at it; to escape; to distract myself from everyday problems; because I'm bored; because I'm alone; because I'm sad or depressed; to feel more powerful; to be in control of social situations; to feel less shy; to make friends.

Juvenile Gambling in North America: An Analysis of Long Term and Future Prospects By Durand F. Jacobs - Loma Linda Univ. Medical Center, Journal of Gambling Studies, Vol. 16, #2/3, Fall 2000

## Advocate The Reduction Of Greenhouse Emission In Illinois And Investment In Green Technology

### **Background:** Why Implement A Cap And Invest Program In Illinois?

- The costs of inaction are high. Illinois can expect more extreme heat and more frequent rains, flooding and droughts if global warming is unabated. Rising sea levels could displace hundreds of millions of people around the globe, creating widespread civil and economic disruption.
- It's good for the economy. An analysis of 24 strategies recommended by the Illinois Climate Change Advisory Group, including cap and invest, found positive impacts on jobs and economic output. It may be years before the federal government acts. Most everyone agrees a federal cap and invest program is preferable to state and regional programs. Yet, despite President Obama's support, a federal program may be years away while the "tipping point" to avoid devastating climate change impacts is approaching faster than previously anticipated.
- Support the President's cap and invest plan. For many years states have acted ahead of the federal government to tackle environmental problems in ways that serve as models for federal policy. There's no better way to advance the President's cap and invest proposal than by creating a program in Illinois modeled after his. Illinois can merge with the federal program once it is adopted.
- Create a substantial new source of revenue to invest in the "green tech" revolution. Millions of "green jobs" are expected to be created from the next generation of industries that produce and sell alternative fuels, export renewable energy, design high-tech energy efficiency solutions, and sell carbon emission reduction credits. This program provides the funds needed to jump start Illinois' green tech sectors.

**Check out:** Faith in Place at <http://www.faithinplace.org/index.php> for additional information.

**We give religious people the tools to become good stewards of the earth.**

**OUR MISSION:** There are two great responsibilities common to all faiths: to love one another and to care for Creation. Faith in Place creates hopeful and welcoming spaces for people of all faiths to fulfill these two responsibilities.

