

Budget Narrative

Brief Summary of Proposal

As a result of a mid-year restructuring last year (2012), the Language Acquisition Department (LAD) of the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) in Tucson, Arizona, was charged with supporting and facilitating the acquisition and assessment of all language, native and second, throughout TUSD. Some of these languages, such as Arabic, came from restructured departments and programs and had been funded solely from grant monies. In keeping with its mission, LAD desires to keep its commitment to supporting and facilitating language acquisition and their cultural components for TUSD students already enrolled in language programs and to expand them to other school sites throughout the district. To do so, TUSD's LAD is asking, with some urgency, for financial assistance from the Qatar Foundation International (QFI), because, without QFI's immediate contribution, the teaching of Arabic will end at the end of this school year in TUSD. Therefore, TUSD is submitting, for QFI's kind consideration of support, a 5-year plan to help establish a growing and sustainable, district-wide Arabic Language and Culture program for native and non-native speakers.

Maximum 5-year Plan Amount from QFI Requested - \$493,000

Background and Context

Historically, TUSD's LAD's main duties and goals were to develop, coordinate and support the acquisition of the English language by non-native speakers of English so that English language learners could participate fully in district-wide academic initiatives in order to meet rigorous promotion and graduation requirements. Last year, when all language acquisition support and resources were consolidated into LAD, its mission was expanded to provide general support to other world language learners to acquire foreign language (and ASL) communication skills.

Unfortunately, due to some district reorganization and some subsequent Governing Board decisions, foreign language teacher salaries and their classroom materials costs are now assigned to the budgets of their respective school sites. As a result, most formerly-designated "critical languages" are surviving on small amounts of carry-over grant monies from the reassigned or discontinued programs but managed by LAD; yet, all of these monies will have been expended by the end of the present school year. This is also the case with TUSD's Arabic language and culture classes.

School sites have welcomed the added foreign language and culture choices for their students; however, they have not had to provide site-specific monies (teacher FTE and curriculum and material costs) for them. Foreign language is considered an elective within TUSD, and students can graduate from high school, by state law, without ever having to study a foreign language or ASL. As a result, foreign language, an academic and intellectually-challenging pursuit, must compete with an ever-growing set of fashionable elective offerings at school sites, e.g., yoga, contemporary dance, pottery, photography, and so on. This is the environment in which our Arabic language and culture classes exist.

Recently, TUSD's Governing Board announced a \$17 million deficit for the 2013-2014 school year, and, even after the proposed closing of 11 schools, \$12 million more will still need to cut. As a result, it was just proposed by TUSD's CFO at the most recent Governing Board meeting that no class period with fewer than 15 students will be funded. This affects, to some extent, our burgeoning Arabic language and culture program in TUSD and any proposed expansion of it to other sites!

TUSD's Arabic Program to Date

Arabic language and culture classes began during the 2007-2008 school year with some money from a special “desegregation” fund and managed by a now-reorganized department at TUSD. This start-up money was then followed by a successful awarding of a FLAP grant for the continued development of an Arabic language program. More recently, Ms. Nour Jandali, the original teacher for the Arabic classes in TUSD, was awarded three grants from QFI – \$25,000 for a Teacher Initiative Grant; \$25,000 for a Curriculum Development Grant; and \$5,000 for a Professional Development Grant. It is projected that all of these monies will be expended before the beginning of the next school year, and no other local or school-based monies exist or have been secured for the continued teaching of these well-established Arabic language and culture classes for next year.

During this time, Ms. Jandali was also instrumental in securing the assignment of teachers of Arabic from the US Department of State's Teachers for Critical Language Program (TCLP) for both the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years. However, due to severe economic funding restrictions and other logistical considerations, TUSD will not be participating in the TCLP program for the foreseeable future.

Nonetheless, during this initial period, enrollments in the Arabic language and culture classes, through the energetic and zealous efforts of Ms. Jandali, have seen modest yet solid growth and expansion. Arabic language classes began at Cholla High Magnet School, an International and Intercultural Magnet School, where many students are from minority and low-income families. Cholla also offers an International Baccalaureate (IB) Program, and a part of the Arabic offerings are part of this Program. From the 2007-2008 school year, where only one year of Arabic language was offered, until now, the number of students completing classes in Arabic has grown steadily from 16 to more than 60, with more than 40 students enrolled in first-year Arabic and nearly 20 students enrolled in second-year Arabic. A small handful of students are enrolled in the IB Program, and it is these students in this Program who are in jeopardy.

At the same time, a Social Studies class, “Introduction to the Middle East”, has been added to the Cholla curriculum, and it is team-taught with Dr. Lisa Adeli, the Outreach Coordinator for the University of Arizona's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. Currently, twenty students are enrolled.

Beginning in 2010, Ms. Jandali was invited to teach an “Exploratory” class in Arabic language and culture at Safford K-8 Magnet School, an International Baccalaureate Candidate school. In nearly three years, enrollments in the now several “Exploratory” classes have grown from 17 in the first year, to 61 in the second year, to more 90 this year with two teachers.

The results from these efforts would not have been possible without QFI's encouragement and funding.

Development Plans, Strategies, and Objectives

It is the desire of LAD to build upon the successes of these first efforts in the teaching of Arabic language and culture at these two school sites and build towards a district-wide, comprehensive Arabic program in TUSD. Our general development plan and strategy is to establish a community-based program comprising of local, interested “stakeholders” brought in and developed over an initial two-year period in an advisory capacity within an overall five-year plan would help TUSD deliver a sustainable program for both college and career track students. To realize this plan, TUSD is requesting a strong first-year influx of “seed money” from QFI which would then be decreased over the next four years to \$0 in the fifth year.

Our general objective is two-fold: 1) to strengthen the position of the Arabic language and culture classes and increase their enrollments at their present school sites so that elective FTE allotments would be calculated to ensure site-based funding by the end of the proposed 5-year plan, and 2) to add a new dimension to TUSD's Arabic language and culture offerings, that is, the establishment of an Arabic for Native Speakers program in concert with the expansion of the Arabic for Non-Native Speakers at new school sites.

New Schools, New Populations

TUSD's LAD is keen to realize the second of the two-fold general objective, that is, an Arabic for Native Speakers program (and classes for non-native speakers as well) at a new school site. In recent years, TUSD has been the receiver of many refugees from Iraq as well as from other nearby countries with related languages. LAD's main focus has been the support of Arabic (and related) speaking students who are classified as English-Language Learners (ELLs), and research has shown that continued education in one's native language enhances the acquisition of ones' second language (in this case, English). The State of Arizona places high demands on all ELLs with high-stakes assessments, causing these immigrant and refugee populations to be placed in hours-long daily English Language Development (ELD) classes. One way LAD desires to support these native Arabic (and related) language speakers is to facilitate a quicker and deeper acquisition of English by offering a native-language development class as an aid to all four language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Catalina Magnet High School is another school in TUSD with a low socio-economic population base due to the high numbers of recently-arrived immigrant and refugee families. At present, there are 35 native Arab-speaking students enrolled at Catalina with more coming from overseas refugee bases and more coming from the younger siblings presently in the feeder schools' lower grades. There are more than 70 other students whose native languages contain many Arabic words and terminology. Site administrators are excited about the possibility to have Arabic for Native Speakers classes (and classes for non-natives as well); however, given the \$17 million shortfall looming over the District and subsequent Governing Board decisions, they are reticent at this point to allocate their teacher FTE (and related costs) to new programs.

Personnel

TUSD's five-year plan envisions at least three Arabic teachers for which it seeks assistance for funding. TUSD uses a \$55,000 figure to include salaries, benefits, and other overhead costs per full-time teacher. All three teachers would be fully funded by QFI during Year 1 with TUSD's two existing teachers being supported to strengthen their respective school-site classes and one new teacher to be hired to begin the Arabic for Native Speakers program (and non-native Arabic language classes with the same FTE). The plan envisions one teacher to be supported by TUSD after the first year, the second teacher to be supported by TUSD after the third year, and the third teacher by the end of the fourth year.

Materials

The cost for instructional and supplementary materials for the native and non-native classes would decrease to \$0 by the third year. Monies for textbooks, such as Alif Baa and Al-Kitaab, for non-native Arabic learners and textbooks (not yet identified) for native speakers as well as supplementary and authentic materials' costs delivered via paid Internet sites and from other sources (CDs, DVDs, and so on) would initially be covered by QFI's contributions; however, by the third year of the 5-year plan, TUSD hopes that the curricular materials being developed by Ms. Jandali and others from the current \$25,000 Curriculum Development Grant would be in place to be used in the classrooms.

Educational Technology

In order to support the general objectives of this 5-year plan, educational technology, including the purchases of classroom sets of iPads (or equivalent) for student use and their secure storage and maintenance costs, the per student costs for online subscriptions to online assessment and portfolio development sites, and in-class instructional equipment such as projectors, portable Interactive White boards, and teacher laptops, is an integral part of the strengthening of the existing Arabic language and culture classes.

Educational technology would also add to the Arabic for Native Speaker classes. While these classes would be based at Catalina High Magnet School, this area of TUSD's plan includes remote and distance learning capabilities for other school sites where other native Arabic speakers are concentrated in significant but smaller numbers (not sufficient to support a full-time teacher) but can be linked through TUSD-arranged and/or purchased (via its community-based partners) equipment and services to link these smaller groups of native speakers of Arabic with the “teacher of record” at Catalina High.

Cultural Activities

Cultural activities would cover the cost for school-based and district-wide activities such as cultural festivals and celebrations, music, art and food demonstrations and workshops, classroom speakers, and special events arranged by community partners. The declining contributions by QFI would be supplemented by TUSD's community-based partners (discussed below).

Community-based Approach

In order to bring about QFI's and TUSD's mutually desired goal, that is, a sustainable Arabic language and culture program, personnel from TUSD's LAD and other departments have initiated preliminary discussions with potential “stakeholders” throughout the community at large. These “stakeholders” include educational institutions, cultural institutions, non-profit organizations, business and professional leaders and other members of the community at large. These discussions have revealed many commonly-shared goals and long-term visions.

One of TUSD'S LAD's long-term goals is to work with local tertiary-level educational institutions to provide articulation of its language offerings for its college-bound and career-track students. The University of Arizona's Center for Middle Eastern Studies (UA CMES) also desires to provide students taking Arabic in area high schools (in reality, only TUSD) to further their language and cultural study and has even proposed an Articulation Conference in a “Bridge Program” Proposal to QFI! Discussions with UA CMES also revealed a treasure trove of resources available to local school districts for language and social studies classes. Both Pima Community College and the UA CMES are desirous to provide pedagogy training for Arabic-language teachers, and TUSD would welcome more highly-qualified and certified elementary and secondary Arabic-language teachers in the District in preparation for an expected expansion of its Arabic language and culture offerings.

TUSD's LAD discussions with leading members of cultural and non-profit organizations have also revealed commonalities. TUSD's interest in supporting and enhancing Arabic language and culture is to prepare its students for a global society where mutual understanding and cross-cultural relationships are more commonplace. One local, secular cultural organization, the Arabian Oasis, also shares this vision and desires to partner with TUSD in fostering and facilitating dialog, relationships and activities between the diverse groups of Arabs and the diverse groups of Americans.

Brief discussions with local business and professional leaders with ties and interests to Arabic-speaking countries and regions have already taken place with generally cautious yet hopeful results.

As a result, TUSD's LAD proposes, as part of its 5-year plan, at its own cost, the establishment of an Arabic Language and Culture Advisory Committee, made up of key members of the local “stakeholders” introduced above, who would meet regularly throughout the school year to review the progress of TUSD's 5-year plan, strategies and objectives to strengthen the existing Arabic program and to expand the program to both native and non-native speakers of Arabic throughout TUSD. TUSD's LAD would provide the personnel and materiel to support the Committee's activities.

Brief Summary

On the first page of this Budge Narrative, we state that the maximum amount we are requesting from QFI for the 5-year plan would be \$493,000. As it is difficult to ascertain exact costs and other expeditures in its rush to present this proposal to QFI in a timely manner and so far into the future given the rather unstable economic period within which we now find ourselves, TUSD envisions a partnership with QFI where unexpended monies per funding area (see Funding Table) are “rolled-over” to the next year in the 5-year plan and that that amount is deducted from the projected expenditure request from QFI for that funding area. For example, if only \$4,000 was expended in the “Cultural Activities” area of the plan for Year 1, then only \$2,000 would be requested for Year 2 in that area (and so on).

In concert with the previous paragraph, TUSD proposes an annual review with QFI of its 5-year plan, objectives and expenditures toward the end of the TUSD school year (late May), so that QFI and TUSD (with its community-based partners) may freely engage in consultations regarding any need to change any aspect of this plan if situations or conditions make it necessary to do so and to reach consensual agreements regarding their proper disposition and reworking, if necessary.

QFI's funding contributions are necessary for the survival of TUSD's Arabic language and culture classes immediately. However, TUSD is hopeful that, with the strengthening and expanding of the Arabic classes throughout the District that QFI's funding would provide, by the fifth year in the plan submitted above, TUSD's Arabic program will remain for many years to come.

Funding Table

Area	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Personnel	\$165,000	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$ 55,000	\$0
Materials	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$0
Educational Technology	\$ 5,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$0
Cultural Activities	\$ 5,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$0
Totals	\$188,000	\$128,000	\$116,000	\$ 61,000	\$0