

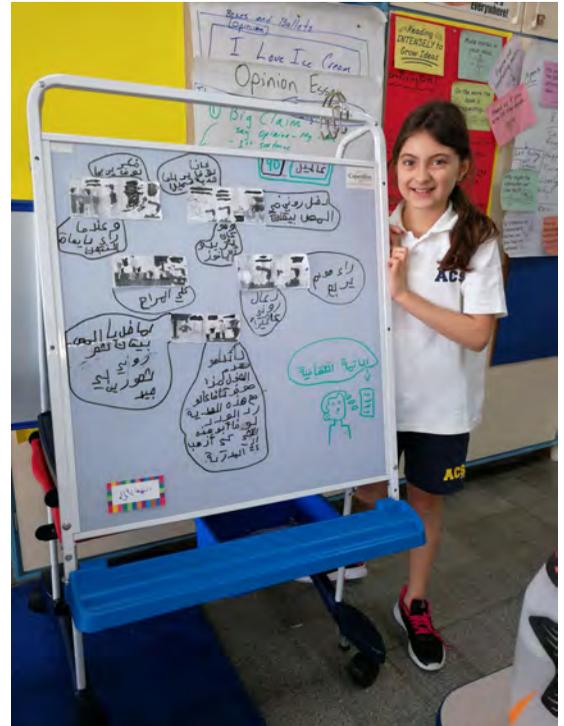
## Case Study: World Languages Program of Distinction - Arabic American Community School Beirut, Lebanon

### the program

The Arabic Program at American Community School (ACS) Beirut is the first to receive the Middle States Association World Language Program of Distinction for offering an exemplary language program, a model of excellence in curriculum design, instructional strategies and assessments.

ACS Beirut is committed to sharing its experience in curriculum design and instructional strategies and will support the development of Arabic programs in international schools using U.S. curricula. In fact, many schools have already used the curriculum and instructional practices as a reference when developing their own Arabic programs.

With the Program of Distinction in hand, ACS is positioned to help these schools develop successful Arabic language programs that create bridges of communication between American education and local Arabic communities, fostering cultural understanding and acceptance.



### the process

American and international schools face challenges in building strong Arabic programs that seamlessly merge U.S. approaches and methodologies with Arabic language specifications. Often, host governments require schools to take a traditional approach to teaching the curricula. This, combined with a lack of proper resources, teacher training, and access to engaging materials, add to the challenges overseas U.S. schools face in developing meaningful Arabic language programs.

To respond to these challenges, ACS Beirut's Arabic program initiated a major overhaul of its curriculum in 2003, which focused on sequencing learning activities so that students were being taught lessons consecutively.

ACS Beirut shared its new curriculum with the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA), which inspired a series of conversations about the issues NESA members faced in delivering Arabic language programs. Eventually, NESA formed an advisory group to offer support to individual schools. ACS Beirut was integral to this process. In 2010, the Arabic program at ACS went through a second curriculum review in response to new standards developed under the American Education Reaches Out (AERO) curriculum, sponsored by the U.S. State Department Office of Overseas Schools.

Today, experienced Arabic teachers incorporate both U.S. and Arabic-specific approaches to a standards-based curriculum that also meets requirements of the Lebanese Baccalaureate track (LB), the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program and the AERO project.

### Lessons learned

- Foster collaboration among teachers at all grade levels. Team meetings, planning and goal setting should include all N-12 teachers, as opposed to limiting collaborative exercises by grade level.
- Encourage parent involvement. We look for opportunities to educate parents about our Arabic program. For example, we arrange for parents to observe an Arabic class in action during an annual school-wide celebration. Often we find that parents are impressed by seeing firsthand the Arabic language education their children are exposed to.
- Build libraries in every classroom. Encourage reading at home by giving students and parents unlimited opportunities to borrow books in Arabic from the library. Ask teachers in all disciplines and at every grade level to incorporate stories and books written in Arabic into their curriculum.
- Integrate technology into Arabic classes to engage students and provide them with important 21st century skills. For example, students are encouraged to use web-based research tools and are exposed to virtual classrooms where teachers can post assignments, offer feedback and facilitate discussion.
- Employ a system of proficiency-based instruction. Instead of measuring student achievement based on grades, attendance or homework, have students demonstrate mastery of a concept by reading, writing, or speaking in Arabic. Once a student demonstrates that they are proficient, they can move on to the next concept.



### Program of Distinction benefits

- Earning the World Languages Program of Distinction elevated the profile of the Arabic program externally. Earning this distinction raised awareness of our school in the community and boosted feelings of pride among teachers and staff.
- Administrators and faculty came to respect the Arabic program more. We now have a seat at the table when important decisions are made about the school's future.
- The Program of Distinction has led to increased unity and collaboration among teachers within the Arabic program and in other disciplines throughout the school.

### For more information

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To learn more about Middle States Programs of Distinction, visit [www.msa-cess.org](http://www.msa-cess.org).



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