

Q:

What is the current status of the proposals to reform U.S. Immigration Laws?

A:

Our current immigration system is broken and needs to be reformed. Immigration laws that are out of sync with economic realities have given rise to a vast underground economy characterized by criminal smugglers, fake documents, and millions of undocumented immigrants who are vulnerable to exploitation. Our borders are unmanageable, and we are unable to focus our enforcement resources on those who mean us harm. Moreover, our immigration system is plagued by backlogs and delays. As a result, employers are unable to hire and retain needed workers, and close family members are often separated for many years.

The Senate "Grand Bargain" bill that began being debated on May 21st, contains several unacceptable and unworkable provisions that will hopefully be addressed before a vote occurs. While the "bargain" certainly contains many important and positive provisions, these provisions cannot be accepted as a "trade-off" for devastating provisions that would harm families and workers for decades to come.

Hopefully the bill will be improved through amendments in the Senate and eventual reconciliation with a more acceptable bill passed by the House of Representatives. President Bush has strongly pushed for a comprehensive immigration bill, and there appears to be a desire by enough members of Congress to get something done regarding this crucial issue. Until there is a new law, people should tell their elected officials that comprehensive immigration reform is a national priority that needs to be dealt with immediately.

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eLycée a new way to learn

eLycée – Practice and perfect your French online

Language skills are one of the keys to greater employment mobility and better intercultural understanding, making it easier to live, work and thrive in the Global Village. In France, parents are demanding that students learn 3 languages at middle school level, and outside France, French expatriates of all ages are doing more than ever to keep up their French language and culture. For students abroad who can't get to French schools, this is not always easy. As time passes, their native culture gradually gives in to their new, adopted culture... and their native language is invariably eroded. Kids rapidly lose their writing skills, their advanced reading skills, their confidence, and their affinity with their native culture. One material consequence of this erosion is that many French students abroad find themselves quickly outclassed by the Education Nationale's Centre National d'Education à Distance: the CNED. eLycée was created to fill the void and solve the problem.

Can you describe your company?

eLycée is the only program of fully interactive French education online. We teach French language and culture to students from 10 years old and up. Our total immersion sessions take place online, in a unique interactive workspace; teachers and students see each other, talk to each other and work together – in real time – to practice and perfect their French using the latest multimedia resources and learning technology. eLycée is an e-company: our offer comprises only online, interactive services.

Where is it implemented? For how long?

eLycée grew up on both side of the Atlantic. In 2005, a group of French entrepreneurs in the US started researching new technology for online language teaching. A team of educational researchers, educators and artists built and tested eLycée in France and the U.S. before launching in North America last year. The company is now based in Marseille, with offices in the U.S.

How many employees?

Our core team consists of 10 full-time employees, based in Paris, Marseille, Lyon, San Francisco, Philadelphia and Tokyo. We work together every day using our own interactive workspace.

Are your teachers employed or freelance?

Our teachers are all employees of eLycée. They are all certified by the Education Nationale Française.

Where is your company positioned in the education market?

Our classes and workshops and so forth are designed for francophone students who already have some French. Many of our young students have attended French schools either here (in the US) or in France, and they either need extra classes or they want to keep up their French language and culture. Our older students might need to polish up their French to work or study abroad. Our adult students use French for business or for pleasure, and we have French teachers who come to us to top up their French with extra classes and to share their experiences in our Espace Professeurs. No English is spoken in any of our sessions, so you need to have enough French to participate.

Are you in competition with schools, languages institutes, or other companies?

Not at all. Even our most intensive classes – the full-time AP French course, for example – only require students to study for 4 hours per week (not including homework assignments, of course), so we do not pretend to replace a full-time French education. Our offer is complementary.

*un nouveau mode d'apprentissage
pratiquez et perfectionnez votre français en ligne*

Are you working with them? Do you have partnerships?

We have partnerships with a number of French schools in the U.S. – we pick up where they leave off, or we provide complementary services for students and alumni on behalf of the schools. We work closely with the Alliance Francaise in the U.S., with regional welcome (Accueil) organizations, with the UFE, and so on. In 2007, Philippe Sauret, Cultural Attaché at the French Embassy in Washington, sponsored eLycée to promote its language classes to students in American middle schools and high schools. Mr. Sauret was particularly interested in the advantages of eLycée's environment for listening, speaking and writing French, its modern teaching method, and its library of multimedia resources. We have also worked with the AATF and the College Board to offer services to students and teachers across the U.S.

What is the competitive advantage of your company?

The great advantage of eLycée is that all our students work from home – or from wherever they might be – but, rather than sit in front of an automated eLearning program, they join friends, colleagues and teachers online in a real workspace. Our classroom – eMédiathèque – is unique. It was designed to enable students to work together in real time, as they would in a real classroom, with shared access to online tools and resources that are not available anywhere else. It's fun, it's different, and it's very popular with both students and teachers. There are no books to buy, there is no stationery used, there are no trips to and from school, and a timetable can be worked out to suit even the busiest students.

How is your company innovative?

Not only, have we developed a totally new platform for interactive language teaching, but also a new method of teaching adapted to an online environment. The group that started eLycée in 2005 was assisted by Goery Delacôte, ex-Director of the CNRS and founder

of the Cité des Sciences de la Villette. Under the direction of Paul Fournel, ex-President of La Société des Gens de Lettres, and President of Oulipo, teams of educators, artists and educational researchers from the INRP (Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique) worked closely together. The result was eMédiathèque – eLycée's interactive workspace – which is currently the only one of its kind.

Do you have an academic status? Do you deliver diplomas, or certificate?

We have no diplomas of our own. We have students who are working towards the DELF and DALF, and towards the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) French Language exam. All our students use the Council of Europe's Language Portfolio to record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences.

What kind of classes do you offer?

We have full-time classes, AP French classes, and summer camps for middle school and high school students; we have workshops and discussion groups for college students and adults; we run exclusive Oulipo workshops; and we host a free discussion forum for teachers.

Is it a lucrative business? Can you provide us with some financial data?

The initial capital outlay was, of course, considerable – the development of eMédiathèque and the online tools and applications we use took 20 months to complete. We expect to break even in 2008/2009.

For more information, please visit www.elycee.com.

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