



Tajikistan School Connectivity Project

NEWS

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The Tajikistan School Connectivity Project for Central Asia has established 24 Internet Learning Centers (ILCs) in secondary schools across Tajikistan. The program's main goal is to increase global dialogue and educational opportunities by installing modern computer equipment with Internet access in schools, as well as developing training and learning projects for teachers and students.

Tajikistan School Connectivity Project activities include:

- teacher training on using computers and the Internet in classroom teaching
- US school partnerships on civic education projects and teacher exchange
- public access and programs for community members and disadvantaged groups
- development of sustainable practices for schools and communities

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Playing 'Where is Misses Mumble' game during the English Seminar. Gulyakandoz, School #16

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Connectivity Students Participating in an Online Forum on the Elections

On October the 7th 2004 students of the School Connectivity Project for Tajikistan participated in an online forum on the subject "US Presidential Elections". The guest of our forum was Mr. Joe Chamberlain, political officer for the US Embassy in Tajikistan. For one hour students from Dushanbe, Nurek, Tursunzade and other Connectivity Schools had a chance to ask Mr. Joe Chamberlain questions about the upcoming US Presidential Elections.

Students learned many new things about the Elections in the USA. Some of them asked general questions on the elections: "What age can people vote in the US?", "What election system will be used in the voting?", "How long will the elections last?", "What is the limit on number of candidates?" etc. Joe Chamberlain gave very detailed answers to the questions explaining the rules of the US elections. Other students wanted to know Mr. Joe Chamberlain's opinion.

The first question was about peace: "Can countries live in peace?" Joe Chamberlain: "The easy answer is that of course countries can live together in peace; I wouldn't be a diplomat if I didn't think it was possible". Mr. Joe Chamberlain was very impressed by students' questions and tried his best to answer all of them.



Joe Chamberlain, Political Officer at the US Embassy in Tajikistan during the forum. Dushanbe



Connectivity Students from Shahrinav participating in the forum. School #18

Connectivity Tajikistan Has Been Enriched with Three New Internet Learning Centers

With additional funding by the US State Department of Educational and Cultural Affairs the Connectivity Program has expanded to three new schools, making a total of 24 Internet Centers in Tajikistan. The new centers are School #12 in Kayrakkum - Sogd region, School #1 Vaksh - Khatlon region, and Specialized School # 8 for hearing- and speech-impaired students in Dushanbe.

The first of the three centers was opened in the specialized school for hearing and speech-impaired students and community members. At the school there are 120 hearing impaired students, and in Dushanbe over 1500 hearing impaired adults. All are welcome to come to the center. Once the children learn how to use computers they will participate in our internet forums and projects as equals in this virtual dialogue. "The Internet has a way of erasing challenges such as hearing and speech impediments," stated Ambassador Hoagland at the opening ceremony. "It is free information for all and free access for all — one just has to learn how to use it." The center will also be used by students from nearby School #51 who will be learning English at the center taught by RI-SOL volunteer Amber Ward.

The second opening was in School #14 in Kayrakkum. This school is located next to the famous inland sea of Tajikistan. At the opening children lined the streets and local education officials were present to give speeches welcoming the center to their town. This is a very progressive school with partnerships with the Soros Foundation and the USAID PEAKS project. The director of this school encourages her teachers to further their professional development by attending seminars, and now they can use the Internet Center to improve their curriculum design and teaching methods.

The third opening was in school #1 in Vaksh. This region has never seen the internet before and the very idea was new to the school and local government. But the school enthusiastically prepared a new room for the center and the students were looking forward to being able to communicate with other students in Tajikistan and America. This region has little or no electricity in winter, so from the first day the computer room was powered by a portable generator given as part of the center. Students are already learning how to open emails and are looking forward to sharing their impressions on the internet forums.

These three new schools bring the total number of Connectivity centers in Tajikistan to 24. For the first time in history pupils and community members of Tajikistan have the ability to share ideas and make friendships across their county and around the world. The centers all participate in forums, share ideas with their American peers, use the internet for reading news, and for finding information for their classes.

We welcome these three new schools to our Connectivity community.



Students in Vaksh ILC meeting RI-SOL



Girls from the School #8 using the Internet for the first time. Dushanbe



Garth Willis, RI-SOL Country Director Tajikistan speaking about the importance of Internet during the opening ceremony at School #14, Kayrakkum



Students at School for the hearing impaired greeting their guests. Opening Ceremony, Dushanbe

Connectivity Students from the US and Tajikistan Learning About Elections During An Education Activity

As the United States prepared to make a crucial decision, in one of the country's closest presidential elections in decades, American students in School Connectivity partner schools – though too young to vote – became very involved in the election by learning about democratic processes and the election system. US students took part in the October monthly collaborative activity, Elections, by researching "hot topics" (important issues) in the presidential election and the stance taken by major political parties on the topics.

Some schools incorporated the Elections activity into larger election projects. The 10th graders of High Tech High International in San Diego, CA, selected the political issues they were most interested in, and formed political parties with students acting as candidates. The "candidates", with the help of their loyal party supporters, encouraged other students to join their party with brochures and convincing arguments in an exciting debate covering chief issues such as... education!

The entire student body of International School of the Americas in San Antonio, Texas, tends to buzz with excitement and political discussion whenever election year rolls around every 4 years. This year, ISA held a 2-week long election event, in which student representatives of 7 US political parties held town hall meetings to discuss their party's stance on important issues such as health care and foreign policy. After learning more about each party, students were asked to choose a party to support. Following a debate between student party representatives, and intense campaigning with banners and slogans, the student body voted in their own election! To find out more about the election event and what party won at ISA, visit <http://www.neisd.net/isa/election/election.html>

Connectivity students in Tajikistan were also very active during the Elections Activity. Students were having debates and discussion about different elections issues: how government does/does not address the problems of daily life, what is a party platform, and how to become involved by voicing your concerns to political parties and NGOs.



Election activity at International School of the Americas, US

Throughout this activity, students have learned about how both an established democracy and a developing country address their problems and disagreements. Ultimately, they learned why it is important to vote and become involved in civic life. Almost all ILC's invited representatives from local political parties to their classes.

As a result students send their summaries about political and election issues to their partner schools in the US. After that students had discussions on the forum.



Connectivity Students during an elections discussion, Kulyab, Lycee#1

Isfara ILC Received English Books from the Garlic Press Publishing House

The Internet is a source of unlimited information for people of all ages. Teachers and Educators these days in Isfara try to learn and improve their skills by being in contact with others.

By searching the resources for teachers on the Internet, Ibragim, the On-Site Educator from Isfara has found many good websites that offer lesson plans, teachers' tools and lot of useful links to free resources. English teachers who have a desire to learn and improve their teaching skills may find amazing tools to make their lessons more fun, and participate in teachers' forums.

By searching the Internet, Ibragim found out about The Garlic Press which publishes English, math, and sign language books for teachers, home –teachers, and for learners. Ibragim wrote to The Garlic Press and told them about the lack of books and textbooks in Tajikistan, which he needs to teach his classes. The publishers always appreciate teachers' comments and suggestions to improve their publications.

One month later, Ibragim was called to the post office to get a large parcel with more than 70 books. A gift from The Garlic Press which he now uses in his English classes at the ILC.

"If you seek, you will find, if you ask, you will get an answer and if you knock on the door it will open: www.garlicpress.com

English Libraries Seminars for the Connectivity Centers

With financial support from the US Embassy in Tajikistan, RI-SOL has organized English seminars in ten ILC's around Tajikistan. This project was written with the main aim of helping Tajikistan students learn the English language better.

The English Language Workshops were held in October in Connectivity ILC's around the country. They were lead by Nigina Siyakova, On-Site Educator from Tursunzade School #101.

Two hundred students and teachers participated in this training, during which they learned how to use the internet in their English language classes (for teachers) and in their study (for students). The used search engines to find specific information, including on-line games and intellectual websites about culture and life in the US. The trainer showed them how to use virtual CD's to study English (from beginner to upper levels) and how to use English books in teacher's lessons and in student's study.

After the completion of the workshop each center received 4 to 5 CD's on how to learn English and 8 to 11 books in English – for students and Teachers – so each center can now create their own small library.

On November 22, 2004 as part of RI-SOL's International Education Week activities, a website called The English Club will debut. The English Club is a website designed to give English learners of different levels a fun and interactive place to practice and improve their English. The website has self-guided lessons of grammatical structures to review, quizzes to self-check understanding, as well as alphabetical lists of common idioms and slang. There is a section designated for Tajik English teachers which will include links to useful websites for English teachers, sample lesson plans, ideas for activities and games. Also on the website is a section entitled "Ask Amber!" where students and teachers are encouraged to email question they have about the English language to Amber Ward, an American teacher of English as a foreign language who is currently living in Tajikistan.

Students and Teachers from the US will have a chance to visit this website – so they can give Tajik students their comments, ideas and simply help them to find more about English Language.



Trainer Nigina helping Connectivity students during the seminar. Khujand, School #4



Discussion during the conference, Prague.

Connectivity Teachers Were Invited to Participate in a Conference on Democracy in Prague

From October 23rd through the 28th there was a conference in Prague called 'Deliberating in Democracy'. Two Tajikistan Connectivity Teachers went to Prague to attend this conference.

The Constitutional Rights Foundation in Chicago in partnership with the Constitutional Rights Foundation in Los Angeles and Street Law, spearheaded this five year teacher-based initiative, 'Deliberating in Democracy.' It was designed to improve the teaching and learning of democratic principles and foster the skills of civic deliberation.

Funded by a grant from the US Department of Education, 'Deliberating in a Democracy's' overall goal is to increase the knowledge, ability and dispositions of teachers, students and policy-makers to effectively participate in deliberations related to democratic principles as applied in their countries. The emphasis is on direct, person to person, exchange of ideas and experiences that gives people a much clearer picture of democracy in action.

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