



Global Connections and Exchange Program

Bangladesh, Tajikistan, and the West Bank

PROGRAM NEWS

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Bangladesh



US Ambassador James F. Moriarty visits Comilla ILC

On November 14th, 2008, the U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh, Mr. James F. Moriarty met with GCE teachers and students of the Yusuf Multi Technical High School and Chowara Girls High School in Comilla.

During his visit the ambassador viewed brief presentations by three GCEP students which showcased the school's involvement in GCEP activities and the learning experience obtained from participating in the various cross cultural online collaboration activities. After the presentations in the ILC, Ambassador Moriarty



Above: Ambassador Moriarty addresses a crowd of teachers, parents, and students.

Bottom Left: Students give Mr. Moriarty a tour of the Comilla ILC

engaged the participants comprising of the students, teachers and the community users in a lively interactive session.

The session covered a wide range of discussion on the US election process, the outcome and its future impact.

At a Glance

- Bangladesh ILC hosts U.S. Ambassador James F Moriarty, holds discussion on elections
- American and Bangladeshi students perform cultural exchange by sending 'information boxes'



Ambassador Moriarty also encouraged the children to aim at becoming change agents to

foster development and growth in Bangladesh. He further advised the student's to

begin prioritizing their activities to plan for a successful career in the future.

Several questions arose from the audience with regard to Bangladesh elections and voting rights. Ambassador Moriarty responded by stating that he hoped Bangladesh would also have a free and fair election like that of the United States of America.

He ended the session by extending his appreciation to the RI BD team and the school manage-

(Continued on page 3)

Cover, clockwise from top: A Palestinian Student in the West Bank paints a mural, students paint a school mural as part of the Jenin school rehabilitation project, and Tajik students celebrate thanksgiving in ILC Sarband.

(Continued from page 2)

ment for organizing the event.

The District Commission of Comilla and the RI BD team were also present at the event.

Kansas-Bangladesh Information Box Exchange

Rani Bilashmoni Govt. Boys High School in Gazipur and John Marshall Middle School in Wichita Kansas are set to exchange their very first Information box. This exchange is part of the latest GCE online collaborative project aimed at facilitating first-hand exchange of information about countries and their cultures. Organizers hope the project will spark steady communication between Bangladeshi and American students through the exchange of a series of information boxes on a periodical basis. The contents of the first box prepared to be exchanged includes typical Bangladeshi art and crafts work; photos of students, teachers, schools, communities; post cards with message and signature ; national information such as attire, flags; traditional/local music CDs; posters and drawings by students; a menu of food students eat at schools, and books etc. This exchange will not only enhance students' learning about diverse cultures and societies but also enable them to view how they are different from and yet the same as their youth peers abroad.



Bangladeshi Students Collaborate with American Students via the Flat Classrooms Project

The Flat Classroom Project, which can be visited at <http://flatclassrooms.ning.com> is a global hands-on collaborative project for middle and senior high school students. Founded by Vicki Davis (Westwood Schools, USA) and Julie Lindsay (Qatar Academy, Qatar), the project uses Web 2.0 tools to facilitate easier communication and interaction between students and teachers from participating classrooms regardless of their geographic location. The topics studied and discussed through the Flat Classroom portal are real-world scenarios based on 'The World is Flat' by Thomas Friedman. One of the main goals of the project is to 'flatten' or lower the classroom walls so that instead of each class working in isolation, two or more classes are joined virtually to become one large classroom through Workspaces and the networking site Ning.

Several GCE Bangladesh teachers have joined the worldwide network of teachers and schools to 'flatten' the walls of

their classroom. They are now connected with the teachers from the Urban Education Institute at University of Chicago and to educators in Texas, New York, Florida, and California.



Top: Joydeppur Girls School students look at the cultural information box sent by Kansan studnets.

Above: Bangladeshi students connect with peers online.

The West Bank



Palestinian Youth Tutor Arabic Learners in Utah, Arizona and Wisconsin Online

The Global Connections and Exchange (GCE) program for the West Bank facilitates an online Arabic-language exchange, whereby Palestinian youth from public, private and UNRWA schools are paired with American schools learning Arabic as a second language.

Students engage through the internet, using a variety of media including videos and forums to introduce themselves and ask each other questions. It is the goal of the program that aside from providing a useful language exchange, these interactions will bring partici-

pants together as friends. To date, youth have exchanged videos introducing themselves, talking about their schools and classes, their favorite music, and the holidays. Palestinian students have prepared vocabulary lists both in Arabic and English, along with photos, for their American counterparts. They have also put together a narrated PowerPoint presentation, instructing the American students on how to form and pronounce simple sentences about music correctly.

Teachers of Arabic from Provo High School, AMES High School, Cholla High School, and the Monroe Arabic Language Club have welcomed the opportunity to enhance the Arabic learning experience in their classrooms and note that their students are now pursuing Arabic with keener interest and more enthusiasm.

At a Glance

- 45 Youth volunteer painting and cleaning for the Jenin Ramadan school beautification
- Palestinian students use music and PowerPoint to teach Americans Arabic.

Jenin Ramadan School Beautification Project

As a step forward to achieve a better school environment and to engage youth in community work, the US Consulate in Jerusalem supported Relief International –Schools Online in a school beautification project during Ramadan (September) in Jenin. One of RI-SOL’s Youth Social Entrepreneur Clubs, formed through the Gandhi

Project, designed and sought funding for their idea. The club wanted to support deaf Palestinian artist Mohammad Shaban, who uses his painting and drawing skills to make an income for his impoverished family. By the end of the project and with help from 45 youth volunteers, Mr. Shaban painted different murals in six different schools in Jenin focusing on Ramadan themes of generosity as well as education. At the close of the project, a large Iftar event was held in honor of Mr. Shaban, with dignitaries



Top: Online exchange screenshot
Above: YSEC students paint colorful murals in Jenin

from the U.S Consulate in attendance. “Jenin is more beautiful now because of the Jenin Center’s work,” said a Consulate representative.



Nablus Center Hosts First Participatory Conference on Education

On the 21st November, RI-SOL's Nablus Community Based Learning and Action Center used the opportunity of [International Education Week](#) to host a unique conference giving students a stronger voice in education. The Nablus Center, created and sustained by the generous patronage of the [American Consulate in Jerusalem](#), was proud to provide the opportunity for students, teachers and officials from the Ministry of Education to participate in a discussion about the educational needs in the West Bank. Speeches were made by a variety of educational professionals including Moawyah

Amar, the President of UNRWA schools in the Northern Region, Ibrahim Shareef from the Ministry of Education and Wisan Abuzant, a representative of the private school sector. During the day, participants raised a wealth of issues including the concern of inadequate school and classroom environments and resources, teaching and learning methodologies, students who drop out of school and the educational curriculum. The event was a resourceful initiative, providing a cross-section of students from public, private and UNRWA schools the opportunity to interact with educational officials and



Above: Conference participants

Below (2): Students and educators gathered for IEW

thus play a vital role in influencing their attitudes towards the current state of Palestinian education. The conference received extensive press coverage in national papers and television. An attending master teacher, Nojoud Al Betawi, was interviewed for Palestinian television saying, "This project aims to connect

(Continued on page 7)

International Education Week

Between the 17th-21st of November, RI-SOL connected its centers across the West Bank to the rest of the world in celebration of International Education Week 2008. This initiative gave our GCEP funded Community Based Learning and Action Centers the chance to engage youth so that they can give voice to what they see as the main issues in education in the Palestinian Territories today. The Jenin Center launched an assortment of programs in conjunction with rural schools, schools for the blind, and special needs institutions. Workshops and activities were coordinated to promote cohesion between different education



establishments. A volunteer from the Jenin center was enthusiastic about the fact that this opportunity sent a precious message to disadvantaged children that "we are with you every step of the way." The center in Nablus hosted a conference in which students, teachers and officials from the Ministry of Education and UNRWA came together to discuss

the education needs of the Palestinian Territories. It received extensive press coverage in national papers and on television where an attending master teacher was interviewed commenting that RI-SOL had valuably "facilitated the connection of students with decision makers". The week's benefits were widely felt and students were enthusiastic. Youth from the centers around the West Bank look forward to sharing their experiences online.



Tajikistan

Teachers in the Remote Ayni Learn About Online Tools and Collaborative Platforms

On December 2nd, RI-SOL provided more than 20 teachers from the remote area of Ayni which connects the north with the heart of the republic with the opportunity to learn about Internet applications and their use at school.

During the workshop, teachers and were introduced with basics of computer basics and browse the net and keep in pace with the rapidly developing applications and platform for teachers and students such as schoolsonline.org, rafi.ki, as well as with teacher and students networks such as ning.com based on which a newly created network of Tajik students and teachers was created. This network is intended to help teachers and students to use the Internet and network with schools abroad and can be accessed at <http://>



tajikistan.ning.com.

Orzu Sultonova who teaches at the Internet Learning Center based in Ayni region has shared her experience using Schools Online platform and presented about how easily e-tools can be utilized by teachers of different subject. She has showed how to register and create educational projects in which students and whole schools from different countries can participate. Ms. Sultonova has noted "...not only language teachers can achieve their goals through networking with schools

(Continued on page 7)

At a Glance

- 20 Tajik teachers trained to incorporate ICT into classroom activities
- Applications used included Interactive Whiteboard and Second Life
- Students learned about American cultural history through a Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving Day at ILC Sarband

Every year students at ILC Sarband celebrate Thanksgiving. This uniquely American holiday is celebrated each year on the fourth Thursday of November. Celebrating early on the 25th and 26th, teachers introduced students to the basic history surrounding the Thanksgiving story through books and lectures, and the entire class was given the chance to create crafts related to the pilgrims of the colonial era. Students performed two plays that told history of Thanksgiving, using props that were created in the ILC such as paper cutout pilgrim men and women. Students also read poems and played holiday



games. Teachers from nearby schools were invited to the ILC students' performance and were given a chance to ask many questions about Thanksgiving

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

abroad but also teachers of other subjects as Algebra, Physics and others can benefit highly from the existing and rapidly developing technology". Nowadays there are many students who are technically advanced compared with their teachers by accessing information about opportunities for learning.

For example, not long ago a Tajik student, who was learning about Nanotechnology through the Internet, using it as a library with current information, has participated in the contest and won the first place.

Taking this into account, teachers were informed and trained not only using the Internet and its application for teaching, but also with upcoming challenges using the tools like Interactive Whiteboard and Second Life in teaching.

Teachers have expressed much interest and expressed hope to practice the tools and exchange with colleagues in the regions, and together continue such training virtually through the Internet by being involved in collaborative projects.



Above: Teachers gather in Ayni to learn about ICT in the classroom.

Opposite page, Top Left: Presentation by RI trainer in ICT

Opposite page, Bottom Left: Students dressed up and made arts and crafts to celebrate the American holiday of Thanksgiving.

At a Glance

- RI-SOL continues to encourage teachers to involve their students with projects through the online portal www.schoolsonline.org.

(Continued from page 6)

and what they had learned.

Two students presented on the meeting of Squanto, a Native American guide to the British, and the tribal leader Massasoit. A second play followed that detailed how Squanto first met the pilgrims, and how they came to arrive in the Americas. Then, students participated in an activity to discuss what each one was thankful for this year. All the students agreed that they were very thankful for the roof over their head, friends, family, and of course the opportunity to come to ILC Sarband and learn many new things. Students enjoyed learning about English through such a creative way as celebrating Thanksgiving, and were vocal in their belief that learning about American culture and history helped their progress with the English language itself.

(Continued from page 5)

students with decision making. Frankly, students are always excluded from participating in decision making which creates a gulf." Students appreciated this opportunity. At the conclusion of events, one student added on behalf of his classmates and fellow participants that, "We thank RI-SOL for their efforts to raise our voices with the ministry of education. I ask RI-SOL to follow up this conference by helping to make changes to our education system."

For further information, please visit us at:

www.ri.org

www.schoolsonline.org