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GLOBAL CONNECTIONS AND EXCHANGE

EDUCATION | INDEPENDENT MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

KEY ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES

- Foster mutual understanding through partnerships between schools in Central Asia and the United States
- Integrate technology into education in Central Asia
- Develop interactive educational models for primary and secondary schools
- Build stronger community relationships
- Provide technology training for educators and students

PROJECT RESULTS

- 60 school-based Internet centers established, providing Internet services to more than 230,000 students, teachers, and community members
- 88,000 individuals trained in computer literacy
- 2,000+ daily visits to online educational portals
- 1,000+ new lesson plans created by teachers



IREX Technology in Education

IREX has over ten years experience integrating technology into education. As a leader in the field, IREX combines interactive teaching methodologies with technology to promote lifelong learning. As a result, communities are empowered through knowledge acquisition and access to information.

Technology in Central Asia

Central Asia is a digitally emergent region. Less than 5% of Central Asians access the Internet more than once a week and few schools in the region have modern computers. The post-Soviet states of Central Asia face lapsed economic growth, curtailment of human rights, and stymied democratization. Technology permeation equips citizens and governments with tools to address these challenges.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Global Connections and Exchange utilizes the potential of technology to bring together Central Asian teachers and students with their peers around the world, enhancing education and fostering critical thinking.

- **Educational Development:** Global Connections trains teachers to develop new lesson plans with participatory, student-focused learning methodologies. Teachers then train their colleagues in interactive lesson design, creating a multiplier effect that has reached thousands of primary and secondary school teachers.
- **Technical Skills Training:** Teachers, students, and community residents are trained in computer skills, providing access to information and employment opportunities.
- **Leadership Training for Girls:** Global Connections empowers girls to learn through a combination of technology and leadership training programs. With their computer skills and access to the Internet, the girls create their own domestic and international peer networks.
- **Online Exchange:** Collaborative online projects with US schools develop peer and professional relationships for students and teachers. The class projects discuss topics such as cultural differences, community issues, and national traditions.

- **Community Mobilization:** Internet centers are a community focal point to support local economic and social development initiatives. Parents often take a leading or joint role in the Internet center's management by fundraising and becoming involved in the centers' activities.



SUCCESS STORIES

Youth Forge International Understanding through Online Discussions

Through Global Connections, students learn about new cultures as they converse with international partners in a structured online format tailored to promote mutual understanding. Global Connections enables students in Central Asia to learn about American life and culture and vice versa. Students of all ages address topics that are pertinent to their daily lives as they practice important technology skills. Global Connections enables students to think collaboratively to identify solutions to international problems including environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS, and human trafficking. As a result, Global Connections students are better prepared to face the challenges of the 21st Century.

Curricula Evolve Quickly through Online Collaborations

In Central Asia, teachers are limited by outdated textbooks and methodology based on memorization. Through training in technology for education, thousands of teachers have begun to use student-centered approaches to learning that foster critical-thinking in students. A monthly lesson plan contest has created and disseminated hundreds of new teaching resources online. These works form the foundation of a dynamic outlook on pedagogy, encouraging independent thinking and problem solving rather than rote memorization.

Sustainability and the Parent Committees Initiative

IREX teamed with parents to create oversight committees for school Internet centers. Parent committees organized fundraising activities to sustain technology and education programming, and recorded the results publicly online using a unique and simple web-based tool created by IREX. IREX provided technical support and facilitated human capacity building as the committees built skills and knowledge. To date, parent committees have raised thousands of dollars to maintain school Internet centers, ensuring that centers are able to continue meeting student, teacher, and community needs. Partnership with parents enabled program objectives to be met while supporting a culture of transparency and accountability.

Students in US and Central Asia Discuss HIV/AIDS

In a live online discussion between American and Central Asian students, students gained an awareness of the global impact of HIV/AIDS. The GCE forum enabled youth to discuss HIV/AIDS prevention, raised awareness about the disease, and addressed stigma. The online meeting was part of a larger Global Connections project on HIV/AIDS between an American high school and schools in Central Asia. As part of the project, students applied graphic editing skills they gained through GCE courses to produce collages based on their research about the HIV/AIDS pandemic.



IREX is an international nonprofit organization providing leadership and innovative programs to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, and foster pluralistic civil society development.



Global Connections and Exchange is a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State.