SUCCESS STORY
Learning to Love Computers

Changing how Macedonian teachers view technology

Nevena Pecijarava and students prepare for a chemistry lesson in Rade Jovcevski-Korcagin High school located in Skopje, Macedonia's capital city..

"I love being able to sit at a computer and create a presentation that can help my students understand the complexity of sulfuric acid," *says Nevena Pecijarava, a chemistry teacher who was introduced to the efficiency of computer technology.*

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Her classes are finished for the day, but Nevena Pecijarava, a chemistry teacher at a local high school in Skopje is still in the computer lab preparing tomorrow's lesson. Just five years ago, Nevena had no access to a computer — neither she nor her school could afford one.

But all of this changed for the better in 2004. With help from USAID, her school established a computer lab with high speed wireless internet access. In addition, Nevena and roughly 2000 other high school teachers underwent training in using information and communication technology in the classroom. Was the training beneficial? Nevena responds with a resounding "Yes!"

"I had to draw diagrams on the blackboard, sometimes four or five times a day. With the new skills I learned, I can do the same work a lot faster," says Nevena. "PowerPoint, Microsoft Publisher and FrontPage are now part of my everyday life."

Despite her enthusiasm, Nevena was not always convinced that computers could help: when she was invited to join the training, she was skeptical and scared. "I really didn't think that I could improve the way I teach my classes. This whole technology thing was new to me and I was a bit unconvinced."

The training was part of USAID's e-Schools Project, which also installed 5,300 computers donated by the Chinese government and introduced the new concept of computer technology in education. In addition, a local private company worked with USAID to set up a country-wide wireless network with the goal of providing high speed wireless internet access to every school in Macedonia.

"Computers have made my life a lot easier," says Nevena. USAID's project has given teachers like Nevena the tools to make their lessons more interesting and encourage their students to love learning.