



**RELIEF**  
INTERNATIONAL

**SCHOOLS**  
ONLINE



## Global Connections and Exchange

### TAJIKISTAN

October-December 2007

Each quarter, we publish a newsletter like this one to update the schools in our network, our donors, and other interested readers of the activities and progress taking place within our program in Tajikistan

Do you have something you would like to add to the newsletter?

Please contact:

[www.connect-tajikistan.org](http://www.connect-tajikistan.org)

[ibrohim@schoolsonline.org](mailto:ibrohim@schoolsonline.org)

The Global Connections and Exchange Program for Tajikistan has established 26 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.



GCE students in Kayrakkum ILC are taking active participation in weekly chats with specialists and officials to expand their knowledge and outlook by getting direct answers to their questions.

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#### Tajikistan Global Connections and Exchange Program activities include:

- Teacher training on using computers and the Internet in classroom teaching;
- Partnerships with US schools on civic education projects, teacher and student exchanges;
- Public access and programs for community members and disadvantaged groups;
- Development of sustainable practices for schools and communities.

[www.youthconnectworldwide.org](http://www.youthconnectworldwide.org)

[www.connect-tajikistan.org](http://www.connect-tajikistan.org)

[www.risol.tj](http://www.risol.tj)

# October GCE Online Chats

The two-way communication capabilities of the Internet not only allows students to exchange information but also ask questions and discuss various topics in education with various experts in live online chats. Chats about American and British



Students in Chkalovsk are chatting to learn more about English language in the United States

English, Life in New York City and American Movies were conducted.

On October 3rd, as part of our activities, we organized a web chat with Mr. Gregory Stephenson to talk learn about American and British English dialects. Students and teachers from Dushanbe, Sarband, Chkalovsk, Isfara and Kulob asked questions and shared their experience learning both American and British dialects of the English language.



Webchat: Life in New York City with Anne Benjaminson

On October 24<sup>th</sup>, the webchat guest was Mr. Bruce Ingraham, an English Language Fellow based in Dushanbe. He kindly shared his knowledge and opinions about American movies with the participants. Students throughout the country joined this chat with many questions. They were interested in learning about the influence of movies on children, popular actors, and the salaries of famous American actors. Mr. Ingraham, an English language teacher, recommended students watch movies with subtitles to help improve their skills in spoken English.



Mr. Bruce Ingraham during the chat with GCE students

The Consular Officer from the US Embassy, Mr. Gregory Pflieger, joined the weekly webchat to talk about "Visas to the US" on October 31st. Students, teachers, and community members asked questions about the diversity card, also known as a "green card," as well as the differences between work visas and study visas to the US. Bakhtiyor Mansurov, a student from the ILC in Dushanbe also shared his experiences in the exchange program to the US last April. He asked whether he could get a visa to the US again. In response, Mr. Pflieger said that those who have been to the US as exchange students are generally given "J-Visas." After returning from their exchange program, holders of a J-Visa have to spend two years in their home countries, supporting development and society through what they learned while in the US.

*These and all other webchat transcripts can be viewed at*

[www.connect-tajikistan.org](http://www.connect-tajikistan.org)

# More October GCE Online Chats

## The Impact of Exchange Programs in a Student's Life

**R**I-SOL Tajikistan has organized several student and teacher exchanges to the US through the GCE and Youth on Free Expressions Exchange Program.

Dozens of students and teachers have had the opportunity to meet their partner schools and actively participate in educational activities such as conferences



Mavzuna Arifova, GCEP alumni during her participation in the chat with GCE students.

and trainings.

Many students who were alumni of the exchange program are now studying in universities both in Tajikistan and abroad. Ms. Mavzuna Arifova, an alumna of the program who visited the US with 8 other students through the GCE program in 2007 participated in the webchat. She was an active ILC volunteer when she studied in Khorog, and is currently a Chinese language major at Tajik Slavonic University in Dushanbe.

During the chat Mavzuna shared her experiences in the US with students from Khatlon and Soghd regions. The discussion covered topics such as education, living with a host family, famous sites in the US, how to succeed in exchange programs, as well as establishing lifetime friendships with people from around the world.

## International Education Opportunities - Chat with Mr. Daniel Stanley, ACCELS

One of the greatest opportunities for students and teachers is to have a chance to study in the US through exchange programs offered by the American Councils.



International Education Opportunities - Chat with Mr. Daniel Stanley, ACCELS Director in Tajikistan

Taking this into account, within the framework of International Education Week celebration, we invited Mr. Dan Stanley of ACCELS to chat with our students and teachers about their study-abroad programs.

Students from different regions throughout Tajikistan joined the chat to ask questions, including students from Ayni, an area which is located in the mountains between the Soghd Region and Region of Central Subordination. Students were eager to know about FLEX program and not only about the testing system, but also about the future of this exciting program for secondary school children.

Many teachers were also interested to learn about teacher exchange programs and expressed the need to have more native speakers visit the remote regions of Tajikistan to help them improve their professional skills.

Other highlights of the webchat included one student from Sarband describing the Halloween celebration sponsored by the English club, and explained the meaning of the upcoming Thanksgiving Day celebration in the US. Another student was interested to learn about the difference between Turkey the country and the bird!

All of the students and teachers greatly appreciated Mr. Stanley's chat. Among the adjectives that students used to describe this chat were: interesting, useful, important, nice, funny, informative, merry, and helpful.

*Send your questions and comments about our chats through the contact form of*

**[www.connect-tajikistan.org](http://www.connect-tajikistan.org)**

# International Education Week

International Education Week 2008

## GCE Students Celebrate IEW

**I**nternational Education Week (IEW) is a joint initiative of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education to recognize the global exchange environment between the United States and other countries.

International Education Week is an opportunity to



GCE Alumni Bakhtiyor Mansurov and Mavzuna Arifova in IEW Opening Ceremony

celebrate the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide.

RI-SOL organized different education programs to celebrate IEW such as inviting guests to have Internet chats, hosting forums with FLEX and UGRAD Program students who are currently in the US, and holding contests for the best artwork, presentations and essays submitted by students.

The best contest submissions received recognition letters from the US Embassy in Dushanbe and the winning students' artworks, presentations and essays can be viewed at [www.connect.tj/en/iew2007](http://www.connect.tj/en/iew2007)



## The First Video Conference Between GCE Students from Bangladesh and Tajikistan

On Thursday, November 15th, GCE students from



Tajikistan and Bangladesh got together to talk about education and its role in their communities through video conferencing capabilities of the Internet. This unique, real-time online meeting enabled the students to communicate with one

another face to face. They discussed the activities they had participated in for International Education Week without worrying about the time differences and long distances separating them. Students also could manage to discuss about their activities dedicated to celebrate International Education Week.

GCE students Raihan, Iqbal, Sohel and Sohidul from Banglades and Bakhtiyor, Ulugbek, Manizha and Farzona from Tajikistan participated in this video conference. They expressed their hope to stay in contact with one another, exchange ideas, and share their individual experiences through the internet in the future.

## Forum with FLEX and UGRAD Students

A forum with FLEX and UGRAD students was a part of IEW activities that allowed GCE students to learn about students who are currently studying in the US through FLEX and UGRAD exchange programs. Amirkhon Bozorzoda, Mukhlisa Parpieva and Zarniso Mamadsaidova took participated by answering questions from GCE students about education and lifestyles in the US.

Nilufar Pirova, a student from Dushanbe Deaf School was interested to know if exchange students met any deaf students in the US. Amirkhon responded to Nilufar's question saying, "I was in Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. So I have had many trips. Yes, I met deaf students. They are same people, and don't worry about this. Keep hard learning and show your talents in your community.

[www.risol.tj/phorum](http://www.risol.tj/phorum)

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# Regional ICT in Education Seminars

*Regional ICT in Education Seminars enables teachers to share the practice of using ICT tools in teaching*

Through a grant from the U.S. State Department Global Connections and Exchange program, Relief International – Schools Online (RISOL) held the first of a series of training seminars for secondary school teachers on November 19-21, 2007. This training focused on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the benefits it can provide to their lessons and for their students. The seminars were held in 3 regions – Dushanbe, Khatlon, and Sughd. A total of 54 teachers attended the events, representing a variety of subjects (e.g. mathematics, literature, language, chemistry, and history).

The format for the training seminars for the 3 regions was the same. In the beginning, participants were introduced with the general

Participants discussed how to improve and add to the educational materials available on the RISOL website ([www.risol.tj](http://www.risol.tj)). They also discussed problems faced by software developers, free open source software, and compared different educational software available online. Many of the participants appreciated the trainings and digital presentations, all of which are available for download at [www.risol.tj](http://www.risol.tj). They felt that the materials presented were appropriate to the work that they are doing in their classrooms and they look forward to applying them to their lesson plans. Above all, it was their sincere hope that RISOL will continue to offer more trainings in the future.

All digital presentations which were presented during seminars are available for download at



**Rustam Kosimov, RISOL Tajikistan National Program Coordinator is presenting about the development and condition of ICT in Education**



**Teachers from regions shared their ICT experience and practice. Gulru Pulatova a teacher from Istaravshan is telling about the use of ICT tools in teaching languages, particularly English language.**

trends of ICT in the world and Tajikistan. Teachers learned about the e-readiness of schools, methods to utilize existing equipment, and the policy of different countries in regards to ICT in education. The participants were introduced to software applications and opportunities on how to create digital educational content. In this section, teachers were introduced to Content Management Systems (e.g. Mambo) to create and publish pages, create glossaries and dictionaries of different kind using Glossword, create tests and quizzes to test students using ADTester, software for use in Chemistry, and Geography using Google Map.

[www.risol.tj](http://www.risol.tj). Other presentations prepared by teachers and trainers were presented to ICT the seminars' participants.

Many of the participants highly appreciated the trainings. They felt that the materials presented were appropriate to the work that they are doing in their classrooms and they look forward to applying them to their lesson plans. Above all, it was their sincere hope that RISOL will offer more trainings in the future.

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# Global Connections and Exchange Conference

November 15-16, Washington D.C.

## GCE Conference in USA

On November 15th-16th 2007, representatives of GCE programs from Middle East, South and Central Asia and North Africa participated in the conference "Speaking the Same Language-Youth Diplomats Online Together" which was held in Washington, DC.



GCEP leaders near US Capitol Hill

All participants gave presentations about G C E and sustainability plans in their respective countries. Apart from the conference, the participants visited Capitol Hill, the White House and also met

with Congressman Charles B. Rangel.

At the conference, GCE participants discussed the future of student and teacher exchanges and Youth Exchange and Study Program (YES).

Conference participants gave presentations on their work with students, communities and the Internet Learning Centers. For instance, Gulnoza Toshbekova's presentation highlighted the impact of ILCs in raising ICT literacy among students and teachers, as well as about the successful



International Community of GCEP

implementation of education projects and sustainability plans/

In some countries, including Tajikistan and Afghanistan, there has been a particular focus on educating girls.

"Traditionally, girls would go home after school while boys might play games or sports with their friends," said Garth Willis, the American founder of the Alpine Fund, a small NGO based in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, that takes at-risk youth on hiking trips for education and adventure. "Now girls go to the Internet centers, where they use the computers to learn skills and to share career goals with American girls."

Mr. Willis, who worked in Tajikistan for several years as an educator and a project coordinator for Relief International, said the conversations girls have on the Internet help them understand that in order to achieve their career goals they need to create a path for themselves to higher education.

The informal social connections are creating a "mental path into the mind of a child," Willis said, and helping students understand the educational process, including getting into a university.

*Related coverage* <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/None/None/20071116170139bcreklaw0.9351923.html>

~ Gulnoza Toshbekova, Program Assistant



Conference participants from L to R: Naser Al-Ardah (Palestine), Gulnoza Toshbekova (Tajikistan), Eliane Metni (Lebanon)

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# World HIV/AIDS Day—International Migrants Day

Celebrating International Days as Part of Every Day Activity

## World HIV/AIDS Day

In order to commemorate the World HIV/AIDS Day, GCE students in the Youth Leadership Clubs and English Clubs in Deaf School and School #10, Dushanbe prepared Power Point

problems. Different public organizations, NGOs and related district committees are working together to solve problems associated with labor migration such as literacy among labor migrants and youth. GCE students in Ayni decided to have an event on Migrants Day at school #1.



Specialists and teachers during the meeting with students in Isfara

presentation about HIV/AIDS. Students in Isfara invited specialists and doctors who explained discussed how HIV/AIDS spreads in the country. They also brought promotional materials which students and teachers used to create posters about HIV/AIDS.

## ILC Ayni Celebrates the International Migrants Day—18 December

Labor migration remains the most important source of income for many families in Tajikistan. Day by day, the number of labor migrants is increasing in different parts of Tajikistan, and Ayni district is not an exception. Labor migrants play an important role to reduce unemployment and poverty rates in Ayni, the migrant community is also faced with many



YLC students are performing a scene from the life of migrants

Students prepared performances, songs, and poems about the lives of labor migrants. At this event, representatives from local Government, Department of Education, International organizations and neighboring schools were present. At the conclusion of the program, students



from the ILC in Ayni received presents and gifts for their the participation from local NGOs Khayrandesh and Chashmai Hayot.

~Orzu Sultonova, RI-SOL Regional Trainer in Zarafshon

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# December Online Chats

About GCE Conference in DC, in memoriam of Human Rights Day and IREX Educational Programs

## Gulnoz Toshbekova Shares Gained Knowledge and Experience from GCE Conference in DC with Tajik Students

On December 5th, Gulnoz Toshbekova, RI-SOL Program Assistant, shared her experiences in the US with Tajik students and teachers. She attended the GCEP Conference in Washington DC and was eager



Ms. Toshbekova and Ms. Anna Mussman, Youth Programs Division Office of Citizen Exchanges

to tell to GCE students about her trip to the US. During the chat Ms. Toshbekova spoke about the conference and places she visited. She also shared her experience of interacting with participants from

different countries. The students were

interested in learning about future GCE programs and expressed the hope to welcome students from the US, as well have an opportunity to visit the USA.

## Webchat with U.S. Ambassador Jacobson on International Human Rights Day

In commemoration of International Human Right Day on December 10, U.S. Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson led a Web chat with GCE students and teachers to discuss human rights issues.

The chat participants from ILCs from throughout Tajikistan asked many questions about the rights to education, gender equity, and access to information via the Internet. One of the highlights of the chat came from Mr. Bakhtiyor Mansurov, a GCE student and alum, who asked a question about the role of the UN in human rights. Ms. Ambassador



Ms. Ambassador during the chat

responded, "the UN plays a very important role in protecting and promoting human rights." She noted, "the most important role must be played by individuals, who must understand their rights and use them to help their countries develop."

## IREX Education Programs in Tajikistan

US exchange programs play a vital role in promoting further awareness of US culture and educational opportunities. On December 18th, Mr. Nicholas Detsch, (Head of the IREX Office and the Manager of Education Programs in Tajikistan) was invited to join a chat with RI-SOL GCEP students and teachers to inform them about IREX administered educational programs such as TEA, UGRAD and MUSKIE. This

gave participants from the remote regions of Tajikistan the opportunity to communicate their questions and concerns to Mr. Detsch. For example, participants from Ayni, an area that is almost



Mr. Detsch is responding to dozens of questions of GCE students and teachers.

isolated during the winter, had the opportunity to ask questions about IREX programs, TOEFL requirements, and alternative ways to submit their applications. After the conversation, Mr. Detsch promised to visit Ayni the next time he travels through the region. Olim, a student from Sarband, was interested to know about the living conditions of students in American Universities, and Mr. Detsch responded that International students typically live as US students and living conditions are quite good. Finally, Mr. Detsch noted that these programs are very important for a post-war country like Tajikistan to assist in rebuilding its economy and establish relations with other countries. He also stressed the importance of the goals of programs and importance of education to build a stable country with highly literate citizens.

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# Festive Season Celebrations

## A Gift from President

With the initiative and support of the president of Tajikistan computers were sent to Sarband as part



Brand new computers for students in ILC Sarband—Gulzira Karimova

of the computerization program. Guizira Karimova, a student for ILC Sarband said, "We, the students appreciate and are thankful for the government providing this support and attention. We will work hard to learn and explore new technologies and be knowledgeable about important current topics and foreign languages. These computers will help us to be leaders of communities and represent our country to the world."

## GCE Students Enjoy Festive Season

The Internet gives students the opportunity to learn and explore more about what they read in newspapers or see in cartoons and movies on TV. Recently, students in Kulob, Kayrakkum, Isfara, Sarband and many other

ILCs use the internet to research Halloween. Students learned about the history and traditions of this day from the Internet such as the tradition of pumpkin carving.

Despite unusually cold weather, GCE students in clubs

eagerly await the festive season of winter to celebrate Halloween, Christmas, New Year and decorate their centers with New Year trees, learn poems and perform scenes in English. On the 28th of December we students from ILC Sarband decided to celebrate New Year and invite other schools and the English club members made a New Year program to share with us. They sang songs and cited poems about Winter and New Year.



ILC students in Kulob like their peers in other ILCs learned how to carve pumpkins

Students Shamsiya and Munira described a picture about winter and about the ways to celebrate New Year and Madina told a very interesting story about



Father Frost and Students saying Happy New Year in many languages.

the Father Frost. Then we called our Father Frost! He congratulated us and asked us in how many languages we can say "Happy New Year!" We can say it in Tajik, Russian, Uzbek and English. Then he taught us how to say Happy New Year in

many other languages. Father Frost also played games and gave presents to all the students. It was really fun. Then our teacher, Zebo, conducted an activity with us. We divided into 7 teams of three. She gave us handouts describing how New Year is celebrated in different countries. For example, our team got the country of Spain and we read about New Year customs and traditions in Spain. The goal was to read the material as a group and present what we learned to the other teams. When the materials were learned and students were ready, our teacher started her program. The teacher imagined herself as a leader of NEWS program and started by saying, "Good morning dear viewers of our news program! Today we are going to tell and show you how New Year is celebrated in different countries. Our correspondents around the world will tell us about different traditions." The Students then acted as reporters reporting



YLC members in self-made New Year costumes having New Year party

from different parts of the world. It was very interesting and fun imagining ourselves like real reporters and correspondents. At the end of the program we sang Jingle Bells and wished each other a Happy New Year.

~Journalists Club in Sarband

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# ILC Opens the Door for a Blind Man

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever" ~Gandhi

Our ILC in Sarband helps teachers and new users in our community to learn basic computer skills. Students from clubs such as the English Club, Youth Leadership Club, Art and Photography, Web Design and Young Journalistic Club also come to the ILC. For instance, English Club members use the Internet and different books to improve their English skills. They celebrate different holidays at the ILC. YLC members use the internet to search for stories and information to include in their newsletters. The ILC also helps the community, even people with limited opportunities. Here is one of the amazing stories that I wish to share. A blind man in our community Mr. Jamshed Murodov came to our ILC with a desire to be a member. He asked me to help him create an e-mail account and he soon became a frequent user of our ILC. Later I learned that he wrote a proposal for UNICEF and received a grant to organize a summer camp for blind kids in our community in 2007. Later, in Autumn, he was busy with another project from SOROS organization from whom he had received another grant. This time he opened a school for blind kids. With the



Jamshed Murodov in "Satr" Center

help of our local Education Department, Jamshed had been given two classrooms in secondary school #1 where he and other teachers conduct their lessons. Jamshed suggested I work with him in his newly launched project. I agreed to teach them about computers. In early December, SOROS organization sent us to gain experience and familiarity in Satr Center in Kazakhstan. Jamshed and I, together with a group of ten people, studied there for one week and learned how to work with handicapped kids. To tell the truth, all the presented information was very new for me! We visited deaf and blind boarding schools where we were able to learn about the many opportunities for kids with disabilities to study. I talked with a blind computer teacher and learned about speech keyboards and braille monitors. Jamshed expressed hope that in the future it may be possible to buy a Braille monitor and a printer. Jamshed is very noble in his work for the students. If for some reasons any kid cannot come and miss lessons, he goes to his or her house to teach.

He is for "Education for all". He says "I do not want any kids miss education." We are very happy that there are people like Jamshed in our country who struggle for literacy.

~Zebo Murodova, RI-SOL Regional Trainer in Khatlon

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