



SUCCESS STORY

Hearing Drives Participation and Transparency at School

Increasing transparency of school financing is a priority of USAID's Quality Learning Project



Photo: USAID Quality Learning Project

Beishekan Sharshenova, honored teacher and grandparent (above center), encouraging parents to actively participate in their child's education.

"It is very important for parents to participate in the education process, and the main thing is that both public funding and parent resources are used in a transparent and open manner."

—Beishekan Sharshenova

When Beishekan Sharshenova heard about a budget hearing planned for her grandchildren's school, she knew she wanted to participate. Beishekan is a pensioner and taught Kyrgyz literature at the school for 30 years. She cares deeply about the quality of education in her community.

The budget hearing at this school was the first for Kyrgyzstan. Beishekan does not remember school budget issues ever being discussed openly with teachers and parents, which is why she was eager to participate. The hearing was held in March 2010 as part of the new per-capita education financing system supported by USAID, and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. It brought together 70 people from the Ministry, district education office and school, local parliamentarians and community officials, the recently registered school advisory committee, school parliament, and others to analyze the school budget and discuss how to use available resources more strategically.

Participants analyzed and discussed school budget expenditures from 2009 and 2010, and the draft budget for 2011, as well as how to best use the school's financial resources to improve the quality of learning. Zoya Pak, Chief Specialist of the Ministry, said, "This is the first time in Central Asia that the budget has been discussed at the school level and this experience should be spread to other schools. The Ministry's position is definitive – parents should be equal partners with schools and an open dialogue should be forged to ensure the transparency of the budget process."

The school's principal, Maria Usdenova, and the advisory committee chairperson were among 124 participants in a three-day course designed to impart the benefits of school-community co-operation. The course focused on the legal basis for community involvement in school management, strategic development of schools, and the role of school advisory committees. The principal and chairperson decided to put the skills they gained from the training into practice by holding the budget hearing. At its opening, Ms. Usdenova stated her goals for the hearing were to "inform her staff and the community about the school's financing, how the school budget reflects its needs, how school funding can influence quality of education, and how efficiently its resources are being used." She and Beishekan felt the hearing exceeded these goals – bringing a new openness and transparency to the process. They hope the hearing will improve the educational experience for all, including Beishekan's grandkids, and will set an example for other schools.