



SCHOOLS ONLINE

Global Connections and Exchange

Palestinian Territories

December 2006

Each month, we publish a newsletter like this one to update schools in our network, our donors and other interested readers about the activities and progress taking place within our program in the Palestinian Territories. Do you have something you would like to add to the newsletter?

Please contact:
middleeast@ri.org

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GCEP-Palestinian Territories enhances local and global educational opportunities for youth in the Middle East. The project provides access to technology and the Internet for schools, extensive training and exchange programs for teachers to integrate technology into classrooms, and a network of collaborative online projects focusing on civic education and global citizenship for students.



GCEP students from Hebron share information about their school and community with students from Bethlehem during a reciprocal exchange designed to foster greater understanding and lasting bonds between the two cities.

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Student Exchange in Action

Our GCEP team in the Palestinian Territories has always strongly believed that in order to foster cultural exchange and understanding between our country and the different countries of the world, we first must focus on strengthening communication within our own country. In order to help make this belief a reality, this month we have initiated a new “student exchange” which aims to bring students together from across the Palestinian Territories. In the first of a series of exchanges, students from our GCEP project sites in Bethlehem and Hebron, two towns that - although only 30 minutes apart - represent very different socio-cultural sectors within the Palestinian Territories, visited each others towns, gave presentations and most importantly formed lasting friendships.

Meeting Together: A Trip to Hebron

By Luay Khalaf, age 15, SOS Children’s Village, Bethlehem

When Khalid Massou, the GCEP Monitor for the SOS Village and School asked if any of us would like to visit another GCEP project site, the Community Based Learning Centre in Hebron, I was really excited at the chance. So on Monday 11th December, I, together with 9 others from SOS set off for the Center in Hebron, looking forward to meeting other students and seeing their GCEP on-line project work. The students welcomed us and then they told us about the center and its goals. We then introduced our SOS village in Bethlehem and the SOS youth girls preformed a traditional dance (al-dabka) which I think all of the students from both Hebron and



Students from Bethlehem perform a traditional dance for students from Hebron.

Bethlehem really enjoyed. One of the students from Hebron then showed us his own web site and his GCEP work on computer. It was a really nice visit, and we agreed that we should start doing projects together to help other people in our towns. I just hope that our next visit will be a bit longer!

Christmas Together: A Trip to Bethlehem

By Raed Hamouri, age 21, Polytechnic University, Hebron

On the 25th December, which is Christmas Day for many Christians, 20 of our school students, accompanied by Omar who is the GCEP monitor from Hebron and myself, all from Hebron gathered themselves and decided to visit Bethlehem, the city of Nativity. The idea came about during the RI-SOL supported Students’ Club meeting in the Hebron Community Based Learning Center. At this meeting the students and a few of us from the university were discussing how school students can learn about the ways that Christmas and the New Year are celebrated in different parts of Palestine, and how to share that, using pictures, with other GCEP students from abroad. The trip to Bethlehem, when suggested seemed like an excellent idea, especially as we had recently met students who live there just two weeks ago in the Hebron Center! *Continued on page 3*



Hebron students interview a priest in Bethlehem.

Student Exchange in Action

Christmas Together: A Trip to Bethlehem, continued

Our trip started early in the morning, going out of the District of Hebron and passing through roads that were surrounded by Israeli settlements from both sides. We immediately fell in love with the natural views of the land along the way to Bethlehem and in less than an hour we were there, in the city of the Nativity, one of the oldest in the world, and, I think, the holiest ever. The decorations of the streets all over Bethlehem were showing the happiness which was spreading around in the city. Even the Nativity Church & the Square, were shining with lights & trees. During our visit we went to many holy sites such as the Church of the Nativity, the Milk Grotto, the Shepherd Field & the old city of Bethlehem. Cameras & notebooks were recording the

sights one by one, and we all had the chance to ask questions. As well as visiting and learning about the holy sites, we also visited the SOS Children's Village which is another GCEP project partner. This school helps orphaned children and students, and it was really interesting to meet the Director of the Center and ask about their work. The best thing, though, was when we visited one of the homes built especially for the students of this village. We were able to meet some of the students that we had met a few weeks earlier in Hebron and, after speaking with them, I am sure that we will be able to do many joint projects together in the future. After this it was no surprise that all of the school students, and myself, left with faces full of smiles & hope for the future!

GCEP Reaches Further through

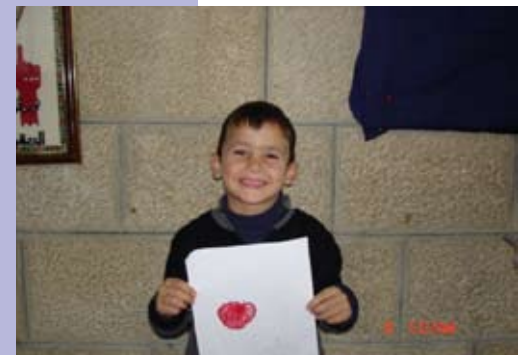
Art



From September 2006 – January 2007, the SOS village in Bethlehem, which provides a safe haven, food, clothes, education, extracurricular activities and care to orphaned and destitute children, has been taking part in a project called VS Arts as part of their work with GCEP. This project is designed to enhance the exchange of students' cultures around the world through paintings. SOS village exchanges paintings with a partner American school assigned by the VS Arts central administration. Under the guidance of Khalid Massou, GCEP coordinator for Bethlehem, 30 students have participated from the SOS village assisted by Mr. Nabeel Elheloo, SOS Activity Organizer and two volunteers.



In December, the School for Arts and Learning in the US received 18 paintings by the students depicting all aspects of their lives, including their homes, school, community and daily life. The US partner school will in turn send their paintings during January 2007 on the same topic, our students are anticipating their arrival! As Mr. Nabeel Elheloo stated, "This project allows the exchange of students' viewpoints through paintings and can make cultures closer between children around the world. The exchanging art idea has really put a smile on the children's faces." Lets hope GCEP can make those smiles stay for a long time to come!



Students Learn About Climate Change

By Jawad Abu-Own, RI-SOL Project Coordinator, Jenin and Nadiah Saba'neh, GCEP On-Site Monitor, Ramallah

It is very important to involve our students and youth in the issues affecting their communities, both on a local and a global scale. After hearing about the UNEP children's art competition on "Climate Change," the GCEP staff in the Palestinian Territories decided to create a lesson plan focused on climate change for the December online project. The lesson taught our students about the environment and the various ways in which they can help care take care of it by focusing on three different levels: the self, the community, and the world. The following gives details as to how the students involved themselves in each phase.

Increased Knowledge & Simple Actions

The first aim of our lesson plan was to teach students in Jenin, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron what we mean by climate change, what the reasons for these phenomena are, and how they can prevent it. The students worked in groups to prepare presentations about climate change with information found by searching the Internet, visiting places in the community and interviewing company representatives. Each group then made their presentation to other class members about one of the specific areas outlined above. We asked students from Al-Najah school in Ramallah to provide their answers to the following questions for this newsletter – could you pass the test as successfully?



GCEP students create their own depictions of climate change and the many problems facing the world that have been provoked by global warming.

What is Climate Change?

Ala': Climate Change refers to the increase in the earth's temperature which is caused by human environmental and industrial practices that send greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases trap the heat and energy radiated by the sun, and keep them within the atmosphere which causes planet warming.

What causes Climate Change?

Diana and Samah: The major cause of climate change are environmental practices like cutting trees. Modest industries participate as well by sending smoke full of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere; this also applies to cars.

What do you think will happen if it continues?

Nora: Global warming will lead to many changes especially in the rainfall - the sea level will rise and a wide range of impacts on plants, wild life and humans will take place if we continue with our behavior.

What can be done to prevent it?

Nadin: We can do many small things to save our planet; we can recycle, walk and ride bikes instead of using cars and, last but not least, we can spread awareness of this issue among other people.

Community Projects

Our students in Ramallah and Jenin followed up their projects by organizing the planting of nearly 1,000 trees in the streets and gardens of their cities in cooperation with local municipalities and companies including Birzait Pharmaceutical Company and the Sharek Center in Jenin. In Ramallah, for example, Al-Bireh Municipality offered more than 30 free trees to be planted by students in the school garden. These trees were planted by the GCEP students themselves, with loads of enthusiasm and good humor despite the hard work!

In addition students from Al-Najah School in Ramallah interviewed Ms. Yara As'ad, the Public Relation Coordinator of BirZait Pharmaceutical Company who is currently coordinating the "Green Palestine" campaign. More than 10,000 trees have been planted across The Palestinian Territories as part of this campaign and B. P. C. welcomed the idea of collaborating with our GCEP schools and project sites. In order to start this off, Al-Najah students will be developing a presentation about the importance of trees for the environment which can be shown in schools, companies and organizations across the Palestinian Territories.



By Aish Said Mohammed Nasser,
age 11, Al-Najah Secondary
School, Ramallah



International Projects

The UNEP children's painting competition on the environment which has been running since 1991 with more than 170,000 entrants from over 100 countries provided us with the inspiration for the Climate Change project and so was a key part of this month's work. As the theme this year was "Climate Change," we felt this to be an excellent opportunity, not only for students to learn about and be involved with UNEP, but also to help younger students share this experience with the older students with whom we usually work (entrants had to be between 6-14).

Our GCEP students assisted our staff in organizing and running two-three day art workshops in schools located in Ramallah, Jenin, Bethlehem and Hebron. Over 400 students participated in these events, producing excellent and creative works of art which communicate the dangers of climate change through drawing. Everyone had a fantastic time and all involved are now looking forward to the next project! The best 20 paintings were sent to UNEP. We will keep you posted on whether we have any winners!!



By Mohamad Mostafa Abu Laben, age 14,
Deheishah Boys School (UNRWA school),
Bethlehem

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For more information about our programs please visit www.ri.org

1575 Westwood Blvd., Ste. 201
Los Angeles, CA, 90024
Tel: 310 - 478 - 1200 Fax: 310 - 478 - 1212



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