

Towards Creative Change in Palestinian Education

Periodical Newsletter of Teacher Creativity Center - 1st Edition



مركز إبداع المعلم
Teacher Creativity Center

First edition

Teacher Creativity Center (TCC) is pleased to introduce the inaugural edition of its newsletter "Towards Creative Change in Palestinian Education". This bilingual, periodical newsletter is being produced to meet a need for information and knowledge dissemination and exchange locally, regionally and internationally.

In this edition we present TCC and give you a first glimpse of our work. The following newsletters will comprise different recurring sections, such as an update on new TCC's programs and projects, people's profiles, success stories, experiences and important news about the educational situation in Palestine. A calendar of upcoming events will close each edition. The newsletter will be circulated via e-mail, as well as posted on the TCC website: www.teachercc.org. Please send your comments, suggestions and contributions to info@teachercc.org.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this first edition!

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TCC staff on the day of the Global Campaign for Education

1.TCC in a nutshell

Teacher Creativity Center (TCC) is a Palestinian, non-profit, non-governmental organization, established in May 1995, by a group of teachers working in schools in the government, private and UNRWA schools. TCC pursues the improvement of the quality of school education, by empowering Palestinian teachers in promoting a safe and democratic educational environment, in accordance with human rights and civic education values.

TCC has been in the forefront of organizations calling for the integration of civic education and human right concepts into the entire school curriculum, not only at the Palestinian level but also at the wider Arab World level. TCC has successfully implemented a number of studies and training programs in the fields of human rights, democracy and civic education targeted at educators, especially teachers, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. TCC issued its new five-year strategic plan (2009-2014). In this new organizational structure there are 3 programs: the Right to Education Protection Program, Community Participation Program and Teacher Development Program. On the following pages you will read more about the projects and campaigns of these programs.

2. Teacher Development program: Project Citizen

Project Citizen has been implemented by TCC since 2004/2005 reaching hundreds of teachers and

thousands of students. The aim of this project is

Training Palestinian teachers to prepare Palestinian students to become competent citizens with knowledge, skills and tools to evaluate and monitor public officials and policies.



Students and teachers during the arbitration of Project Citizen.

The overall project is designed to give students active experience implementing democratic practice, ensuring good governance, and abiding rule of law. Issues of great relevance to their lives are selected to make the experience relevant including violence, early marriage, pollution,...



Student in Gaza explains her project to the arbitration committee .

The project employs action learning methodology which consists of four steps including the identification of a community problem, the study of the articles in the constitution related to the problem, interviewing responsible public officials, residents, professionals on viable alternative solutions or changes in policies, and putting forth a plan of action publicizing the work to the responsible governmental agencies, public officials, media and community activists and residents

The project design allows for student mobilization of different sectors of society giving community residents a voice regardless of gender, age and social, financial and educational status as they are the leaders of this initiative.



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Final ceremony of Project Citizen 2008-2009 held at the Ramallah Cultural Palace, October 24 2009.

Success stories

Due to the projects of Mazari Al-Noubani and Aroura schools in the Ramallah district in 2007 the students were able to maintain and protect the villages' cultural heritage. Before the implementation of this project, the villagers used many of the old buildings as dumpsites. The students raised the local population's awareness of the cultural value of those buildings. With help from the school administration, teachers, and the local council, they managed to get aid from the UNDP to rehabilitate some of those old buildings and transform them into a cultural center.

Hebron district without any books resources, considered establishing a library important. Their serious efforts lead to constructing a library in their village to benefit the public. They have gained support from different organizations in terms of books supply.

In Balata Refugee Camp (Nablus district) the students treated the issue of waste containers located at the camp's entry very close to the school. The students managed to get the approval for removing the waste containers with support of the municipality officer in coordination with the UNRWA. Additionally the camp principal instructed the cleaning workers not to burn the containers content, and the municipality started emptying the containers more than one time per day.

This project attracted huge press coverage. Many media organizations have visited the school and broadcasted reportages on the students' project and its success.

A school in Jenin addressed the problem of the environmental impact of burning damaged books. The students stated that this is a polluting process which reflects an uncivilized attitude. To resolve this problem, the students adopted a policy of paper recycling. They were able to reach an agreement with one of the factories located in Ramallah in order to implement this solution.



Girls dancing debka during the Final ceremony of Project Citizen 2008-2009.

For more pictures, please click on this link:
<http://www.teachercc.org/news-events/lastnews/news26102009e.htm>

3. Community Participation Program: Parent Councils

The Teacher Creativity Center continued its efforts in empowering parents' councils and parents towards enhancing their role in promoting a safe democratic school environment in accordance with human rights and civic values.

A major project was recently completed that included training a number of parents councils and parents in the West Bank on effective council management, human rights specifically the rights of children in the school context, skills of advocacy, lobbying and networking and the knowhow on monitoring and addressing rights violations in schools via implementation of rights based approach action learning interventions. The trained parent councils and recruited parents identified violations in schools and designed interventions rallying the support of as many sectors of society as possible. The mothers' and parents' councils continually meet with other councils transferring their knowledge and skills and sharing their success in protecting rights of children in schools. They are indeed a catalyst for change!



Parent Council meeting .

A Success Story:

The trained mothers' council in the Tammoun village of the Tubass District applied the knowledge and skills acquired and addressed the issue of the sanitary problem in their daughters' school. The toilets in this girls' school were located 5 minutes walking from the school. Beside the remoteness, the toilets were very dirty and not well-maintained. As a result the girls preferred not to go to the toilets during school time and to wait until they returned home. This caused many psychological and health problems, as well as a lack of focus which made the girls underperform. The mothers publicized the problem by networking with the local community and the village mayor. After establishing a committee in collaboration with the school students, a collection of funds from different members of the village was initiated towards resolution of this problem and the rights violations that are associated with it. The council was able to advocate and receive support from the Ministry of Education receiving further funding needed and approval for the building of a modern, large sanitary unit building within the walls of the

4. Right to Education Protection Program: My Arabic Library



Promoting reading

"My Arabic Library" is a remarkable comprehensive educational program, implemented by TCC in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The project is developed by Scholastic International, one of the largest international publishers of children's books.

This project aims at promoting reading among children, as well as developing their reading skills. Each library includes 30 to 40 interesting titles, in addition to five paperbacks of each title, one teacher manual, and a poster. The books are translated into Arabic after Arab educational experts selected and edited them. The books vary in content and include science, comic, real-life stories, fiction and fairy tales, biographies and tales from around the world to mention a few. They are produced in attractive styles using joyful colors, amusing pictures and expressive cartoons and can be read inside and outside the classroom.

Learner-centered approach

In addition the project has a training program for teachers and other people involved in the library activities. Teachers can integrate the books into the curriculum, through implementing various activities in mathematics, science, and geography courses. My Arabic Library encourages a teaching process centered on the learner. It highlights the learner's needs, abilities, and interests, and reinforces active

learning methods. The students decide which materials from “My Arabic Library” capture their interest and benefits them the most.

Project's justification

Studies indicate that children do not read enough in Arabic for several reasons. One of them is the lack of quality books; another reason is the parents' financial inability to provide books to their children. In addition, teachers lack educational material and references that would provide them with the most modern educational strategies and methods. Arabic teachers need more training and workshops to enhance their ability to teach their mother tongue.

For these reasons TCC has encouraged the implementation of “My Arabic Library” in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and supported by Scholastic International. TCC is convinced of the importance of this project and its positive impact towards the fulfillment of children's' needs.

5. International networking at TCC

TCC welcomes the involvement of international volunteers, researchers and educational experts in its projects and programs. Internationals enhance TCC's programs and resources by giving trainings and workshops providing new skills and knowledge with regards to human rights and civic education. Coming from various backgrounds and cultures, they bring new ideas, expertise and fresh perspectives. Visa versa the international participants will get input from their Palestinian colleagues working in the field of human rights and civic education. Additionally, international participation creates and strengthens international networks of solidarity and support between international and Palestinian students, teachers, academics, organizations and universities.

Le chantier des porte-plumes at TCC



Guilhem and the girls at Kharas summer camp play volleyball.



Guilhem, Coline, Franck and Julien, four French students who volunteered with TCC .

Pioneer mission

Four French students set up a pioneer mission to Palestine in July 2009. They choose TCC as their local partner. Coline, Franck, Guilhem and Julien are members of « Le chantier des porte-plumes », a group of students with the desire to take part in international solidarity missions. During their stay in Palestine they gave interactive creative workshops during the summer camps in Birqin (near Jenin), Khalas (near Hebron) and Nablus. This experience gave them an insight on how Palestinian teams work, as well as on the broader social, educational and political situation. They worked with different children: a group of young girls in Khalas, a mixed group as well as handicapped children in Birqin and finally a group of young girls in Nablus. The second part of their mission was to enforce TCC's institutional capacities.

From Coline's Diary

July 20: Arrival in Nablus

We arrived in Nablus and met Nisreen (TCC's summer camp coordinator) and the staff of the Mothers School Society Center. During the school year this organization gives Arabic, English and mathematics lessons to mothers. During summer, the Mother's school society organizes different summer camps. We slept in a hospital. A doctor showed us our room with an amazing view on the city. After the hospital staff has left, we explored our 'hotel' and found a swimming pool, sport yard and sauna. We always end up in unexpected and intriguing situations!

July 21

In the morning we did a creative activity with the girls. On a big sheet of paper the girls wrote words and sentences or made drawings connected to the “freedom” theme. Then every group chooses 5 words and make a story with this word, a real story or a tale, with real people or even with animals. The activity worked well, although “freedom” was a difficult theme for the Palestinian girls because it is inevitable linked with the political Palestinian situation. It was interesting for us to see their point of view about the situation, a child point of view. We hanged the drawings on the wall which immediately gave colour to the room. It gave the girls the feeling that it was “their” room.

July 23: final day

Today we play several games such as “Pictionary” (guess what somebody is drawing), a “blind game” (two girls from two different teams were a blindfold and have to find a ball following the indications given by their team), “Taboo” (guess a word that somebody is playing).

Our general feeling about this summer camp is very positive. The activities worked well. The girls were interested in our ideas and they had a lot of fun! We were very pleased with the volunteer who helped us with the translations and with the camp coordinator and trainers. We express our deep gratitude for their help in making this a successful experience for all of us!!

Future projects

Because the French group and TCC evaluated this first mission and the partnership very positively, both parties encourage further cooperation. In cooperation with TCC « Le chantier des porte-plumes » wants to develop theatre training courses for the summer camp volunteers. The goal will be to create a theatre show with the children, with the support of the trained volunteers. The group expressed the need to develop activities specially designed for disabled children. If needed TCC is willing to finance to a certain extent « Le chantier des porte-plumes » future projects.

6. Campaigns

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE)

Education for All is a campaign organized and run by the GCE (Global Campaign for Education), in conjunction with other key bodies interested in Education for All. The campaign will secure the support of millions of people who want world leaders to act on education.

GCE in Palestine

The Global Campaign for Education aims to improve the right of education as one of the basic human rights, and to spread awareness among people about the importance of education. In addition it encourages the governments to fulfill their commitments to support education by providing free and compulsory education for all children. The general director Refaat Sabbah from Teacher Creativity Center leads the national coalition of the GCE campaign in Palestine.

In 2008 approximately nine million people took part in the World's Biggest Lesson including national leaders and celebrities such as Shakira.

In 2009 over 1200,000 Palestinians and more than 20 organizations of the Palestinian Coalition for



Safe School Environments participated in the global campaign for education action week which focused on illiteracy and adult education under the slogan of “Adults read...Open Books...Open Doors”. During the action week students from all schools implemented different cultural and artistic activities such as drawings, theater sketches, competitions, and panels about the impact and importance of reading, students and teachers also read stories from the campaign big book. Over 32,000 persons from the local society participated in the school activities during the action week. For 2010 the GCE Board has selected the theme of Education Financing for the GCE Global Action Week.



Queen Rania from Jordan and football players promote Education for All

We are going to call upon governments to meet pledges as well as make new commitments towards financing education .

Teacher Creativity Center and the Coalition for Safe School Environment will organize several activities. Find out more through this link:

<http://campaignforeducation.org/en/palestinian-territories/>

The Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) is a growing alliance that brings together trade unions, NGOs, the women's and youth movements, community and faith groups and others to call for action from world leaders in the global North and South to meet their promises to end poverty and inequality. Since 2005, the TCC has been an active member in the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), where it operated mainly within schools to support poor students, and to act against the damaging influence of occupation on learning quality and life quality, as well as to urge international community to meet its obligations towards poverty reduction in this region.

This year 485,023 UNRWA school children in the West Bank, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, stood up simultaneously and shouted "No to poverty" in protest of their own poverty and the poverty of others throughout the world. The Palestine refugee communities are profoundly affected by poverty. Unfortunately in the past year the socio-economic situation in Gaza has deteriorated further. The continued border blockade has meant continued economic stagnation. This has been compounded by the destruction of key industrial and civilian infrastructure during the three-week Israeli offensive at the beginning of the year. In Shu'afat Girls School in the West Bank the debate was lively. "I'd like to tell the world that there is no shame in poverty" said Iman one of the 8th graders. "I wish that the world would raise its voice" chipped

As to ideas on how to tackle poverty, Ayat Hamden from the 10th grade knew exactly what she thought would help. "There needs to be cooperation, we need to be given education, job opportunities and freedom to travel". Another 7th grader offered a closing thought on the theme of the need for cooperation to tackle poverty. "Everyone needs to work together, the Jews and the Arabs, all the people in the world, we all need to learn to live together."



Al Bireh school children wearing boards with slogans such as "no to poverty and hunger".

The campaign advocated for better salaries and work conditions for teachers. The students and their parents expressed their love and appreciation for teachers in their great role of providing quality education. Students gave flowers to their teachers and wore hats with the slogan "I love my teacher".

For more information please click on the following links:

<http://standagainstopoverty.org/>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiAOf_Ui1RA&NR=1 (movie)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtojKBYKm8M> (movie)



7.Upcoming events

End of January 2010: National Conference on Vocational Training and Education

The Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (*dvv international*) and TCC cooperate in Promoting Vocational Education and Training as a means for poverty reduction on the long term. All debates and interactions within the workshops will culminate in the national conference.

October 2010: World Education Forum in Palestine

Following the discussions at the last two meetings of the International Council of the World Social Forum it was resolved to hold the World Education Forum in Palestine in October 2010. The World Forum on Education in Palestine in October 2010 promises to be a watershed event which will begin to unravel existing mind sets and catalyze movement toward construction of another, more peaceful world – from a region where the need is immense.

Please consult TCC's web site for further updates on the WEF.

Summer 2010: Academy

The establishment of the Academy is one of TCC's programs, in partnership with Sustainability Frontiers and Muwatin. The aim of this Academy is to broaden the experience of Palestinian and international teachers by emphasizing development of skills, capacities, new mindsets, values engagement and action learning



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