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In our rapidly changing, interconnected world, education that helps children develop into collaborative problem solvers who are ready for the workforce is essential.

GLOBAL COMPETENCE

for TODAY and the FUTURE

As our world becomes increasingly interconnected, our education systems must prepare students with the skills and knowledge to be able to thrive in a global economy and society. Toward this end, teachers play a key role in supporting students to develop as global citizens who bridge cultural divides, understand sustainable development issues, and act as changemakers in their communities. iEARN-USA connects an international community of K-12 educators and youth to collaborate and learn together on projects designed to make a difference in the world.

Connie Rensink,
iEARN-USA

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to evaluate education systems, specifies that globally competent individuals can:

- Examine local, global, and intercultural issues
- Understand and appreciate different perspectives and worldviews
- Interact successfully and respectfully with others
- Take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being.¹

Through iEARN programming, students acquire these important 21st-century skills and global competencies, allowing them to communicate ideas, recognize other perspectives, and take action while connecting their learning to real-world issues.

iEARN-USA and Physical Exchange

• National Security Language Initiative for Youth

www.nsliforyouth.org/

As a sub-awardee of American Councils for International Education, iEARN-USA is part of a consortium of recruiting organizations for the National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) program to promote critical language learning among American youth. iEARN-USA works with iEARN country partners in several countries to place and support NSLI-Y participants. Through the NSLI-Y program, the U.S. Department of State, in cooperation with American Councils for International Education, awards and administers merit-based scholarships to high school students for participation in summer and academic year immersion programs in locations where the eight NSLI-Y languages are spoken. NSLI-Y immerses participants in the cultural life of the host country, giving them formal and informal language practice

and sparking a lifetime interest in foreign languages and cultures. Participants receive intensive language instruction, live with a host family for all or part of the program, and participate in community service and a variety of cultural activities. iEARN-USA staff also manages the NSLI-Y Interactive website (www.nsliforyouth.org/), which showcases language learning and cross-cultural experiences of students on the program.

• The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study program www.yesprograms.org

iEARN-USA is also a recruiting organization for the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program, working with our country partners to recruit students for the program. In October 2002, the U.S. Congress established the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program in response to the events of September 11, 2001. The program is funded through the U.S. Department of State and sponsored by the Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs (ECA) to provide scholarships for high school students from countries with significant Muslim populations to spend up to one academic year in the United States. Students live with host families, attend high schools, engage in activities to learn about American society and values, acquire leadership skills, and help educate Americans about their countries and cultures. Starting in 2009, the YES Abroad program (<http://yes-abroad.org/>) was established in order to provide a similar experience for U.S. students (15-18 years old) to spend an academic year in select YES countries.

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iEARN-USA also manages robust YES alumni support, leading capacity-building workshops each year and remaining connected through ongoing newsletters. YES alumni have been an integral part of iEARN conferences over the years.

iEARN-USA and Virtual Exchange

www.us.iearn.org

Through iEARN virtual projects, two or more groups of students and educators in different parts of the world collaborate on academic endeavors. Teachers and students collaborate in iEARN's online platform to meet one another virtually, participate in discussions, and create projects with classrooms around the world. iEARN projects take on many different forms, but most are rooted in

the pedagogy of project-based learning. Every iEARN project aligns with one or more of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), enabling youth to become global citizens who make a difference by collaborating with their peers around the world.

iEARN has developed more than 100 projects in multiple languages, all designed and facilitated by teachers and students to fit their curriculum and classroom needs and schedules. Projects align to education standards, including Common Core State Standards, and use a safe and secure structured online Collaboration Centre. In addition to meeting curriculum needs, every project in iEARN has to answer the



Students in Japan prepare a poster about Girl Rising to display in their school.



Online Girl Rising discussion between Japanese and Tunisian classes.

following question: “How will this project improve the quality of life on the planet?”

iEARN Outcomes for Global Competence

The following examples show some of the ways youth are learning about global issues and making new friends, while developing global competencies through iEARN physical and interactive project exchanges.

• Connect with and become part of a global community.

iEARN participants become global citizens who make a difference. In February, five iEARN YES alumni in Israel Arab communities attended their second class of a five-session career planning workshop organized by the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv. At the workshop, alumni learned about a variety of career paths, tips for writing resumes and job applications, and common job interview questions. Twelve participants from other embassy exchange programs attended the workshop along with the YES alumni.

Through collaboration on projects aligned with the UN SDGs, with the goal of improving everyone's quality of life, project participants build global awareness. Girl Rising, an iEARN project for students ages 12 to 18, engages youth in learning about gender equality and quality education. The

project is based on the film “Girl Rising” that tells the story of nine unforgettable girls living in the developing world—ordinary girls who confront tremendous challenges and overcome nearly impossible odds to achieve their dreams and obtain a quality education. Students are encouraged to ask each other questions and suggest possible actions that can be taken to help ensure achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Quality Education for All. Girl Rising participants have included classes in Japan, Morocco, Israel, Uganda, India, Georgia, and the United States.

• Develop and use communication skills to connect with diverse audiences.

Early this year, 17-year-old Faisal, an iEARN YES alum from Bangladesh, ran a media literacy workshop at a local middle school in Dhaka. Sixty-five students between the ages of 14 and 18 attended the workshop to learn strategies for identifying false information in the media. The participants listened to a lecture by a keynote speaker about media literacy and discussed examples of false information. A short survey at the end of the workshop showed that nearly 95% of the participants found the workshop to be productive.

In the ongoing Digital Storytelling for Exchange project (<https://iearn.org/cc/space-2/group-680>), students develop narrative skills in 2-minute video-mediated and structured stories

on life experience, establishing mutual understanding to strengthen tolerance and thereby minimize prejudice and bias.

• **Develop openness and respect toward people from other cultures and perspectives.**

During the extended winter break, NSLI-Y students had a chance to make new Korean friends through the Hanmi Cultural Explorers' Project. The project pairs one Korean student with two or three NSLI-Y students to engage in a collaborative research project. The main goal of this project was to increase mutual understanding between NSLI-Y students and their Korean peers. Students collaborated on all stages of the project, including choosing the topics, conducting the research, and preparing the final presentation. Some project topics that highlight the depth of cultural learning that took place include:

- The 4/16/2014 Sewol ferry disaster
- The history of the U.S. army presence in Korea
- The Korean sub-culture of disabled marathon runners.



Students from Colombia and Georgia prepare their cards to send to their global partners in the exchange.



Recently, NSLI-Y Interactive hosted a Korean Language Learning virtual event with Korean academic year alumni. The event featured two Korean academic year alumni who had returned to the United States due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The NSLI-Y students prepared presentations about their experience learning Korean prior to and with the NSLI-Y program, and about the impact their cultural explorers research project has had on their language acquisition.

One of the most popular iEARN projects for teachers just getting started in international exchanges is the Holiday Card Exchange project. In addition to mailing holiday cards to their partners, students post messages to each other in the project's online discussion forum and ask questions about their new friends at the partner schools.

• **Take collaborative action to make meaningful contributions to their local and global communities.**

The iEARN-USA YES team has hosted two successful Virtual Alumni Leaders Training (VALT) events. VALT is a series of online trainings to enhance and expand participants' skills and knowledge in leadership and mentoring, team building, communication, motivation and engagement, and project management to ultimately expand the impact of YES alumni associations. VALT teaches sustainable practices that participants bring forward to their respective alumni associations to grow in active alumni members and community impact.

Taking the UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation and Goal 14 - Life Below Water as their inspiration and focus, students in the Water Is Life project identify a local issue related to water use in their communities and identify an area where they can make a difference. In one collaboration, classes in Iran and Australia focused on sustainable sources of clean water in their communities by testing water filtration systems and investigating solar distillation.

Sustainable Development Goal 6 – Clean Water

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Sustainable Development Goal 14 – Life Below Water

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.

iEARN Innovation

iEARN has pioneered global linkages to enable students to engage in meaningful educational projects with peers in their countries and around the world since 1988. The following initiatives and recognitions demonstrate how iEARN continues to lead Global Education innovation.

- In January 2020, the World Economic Forum (WEF) identified iEARN as one of 16 models for the future of education for the 4th Industrial Revolution.² iEARN is featured in the Interpersonal Skills section of the report, which emphasizes interpersonal emotional intelligence skills and traits, such as empathy, cooperation, negotiation, leadership, and social awareness.
- iEARN-USA also co-founded the Global Education Coalition (www.gloaledcoalition.org/) to actively engage with thought partners and innovate in the field of global education through collaboration. This broad network of organizations is committed to ensuring that every student has meaningful opportunities to learn the global competencies necessary to succeed in an interconnected world.