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TAJIKISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

New Teaching Methods Take Root

Tajikistan's teachers embrace child-centered teaching methods with USAID support



Teachers enjoy learning the new child-centered methodology during a USAID training session in Kulob. Photo: Creative Associates

USAID's Quality Learning Project helps Tajikistan's teachers to move away from rote-learning to interactive methods geared towards improving learning outcomes at schools.

For years, even decades, Tajikistan's children learned by rote memorization, a teaching method that does not foster critical thinking and is teacher driven.

But, over the past year, the USAID Quality Learning Project has trained 1,000 teachers in a new pedagogy that is child-centered—one that takes into account students' learning styles and promotes the development of each child. This pedagogy teaches that learning is the result of a mind well formed rather than one that serves as a simple repository for data. Widely praised by teachers and beneficial to students, the new method of instruction aims to move a generation of teachers and students into the 21st century.

Yet, the unfamiliar child-centered pedagogy has left some teachers wary of implementing the new methods, especially after the trainers have left. The training, while extensive, lasted only a few days. To bridge the gap between the "old" method and the "new," the Quality Learning Project team initiated a mentoring program to bolster teacher confidence, a critical element in the long-term implementation of the new methodology.

"The training, above all, helped me to change myself and then my entire approach to the learning process and way of working with the kids and my colleagues. I am now much more aware how to approach my colleagues and help them to change as well," said Hadisa Jumaeva, a primary school teacher-mentor in Kulob. "It is always difficult at the first stages to introduce new behaviors into professional lives, because old habits are constantly resurfacing."

The new mentoring program enables USAID to complement its training. The application of modern teaching and student assessment methods will continue in Tajikistan's schools, ensuring maximum training outcomes.

"We developed criteria and indicators to improve our mentoring skills. We reflected on what qualities were needed of a mentor and applied the training to develop such qualities. Throughout the training, we had to continuously evaluate our actions to make them measure up to the parameters we developed and agreed upon," said Boron Madiyorov, one of the teacher-mentors USAID helps prepare. "This urged us to change something within us every time we behaved contrary to the mutually agreed parameters. For me, it was a wonder to see myself changed in such a short time!"