

Digital Literacy to Empower Young Women:

ARMENIA

This project is led by Anna Jackson, a Volunteer from Virginia

Give to this Project: \$2,279.86 TO MEET GOAL

In order to improve our girls' education and empower young women in our community, we are requesting funding for 2 computers, a projector and screen, and supplies to conduct Digital Literacy Workshops. This addition to our out-of-date computer room will serve a variety of populations for a long time. Our 268 female students ages 7-15 will indirectly benefit from lessons supplemented with technology and multisensory learning techniques, with 101 female students from grades 6-9 who have IT classes using the computers with supervision. They will acquire necessary skills for future university and job applications with their IT classes incorporating the technology their books discuss. Our girls will gain confidence and exposure to pursue leadership opportunities and careers in all fields. Our 36 teachers will incorporate new methods and content to create more comprehensive modern lessons and reach all learners. We will conduct Digital Literacy Workshops for 20 mothers and 20 young women in our students' families over 4 weeks from 21 January - 15 February. Mothers will meet twice a week and young women once a week for 4 weeks and learn about Microsoft Office, internet navigation, and resume writing. Facilitators will volunteer their time, the school will donate space and existing functional computers, and participants will get themselves to the school. A school this large has many needs, but this project utilizes personnel, space, and equipment already in place with minor additions to transform the educational experience of our girls and engage and equip the women of our community.

For 17 months, students, teachers, parents and staff have noted what a shame it is that we have a large furnished computer room with 11 computers but teachers cannot file their online grades at the end of the day reliably because our computers are so unpredictable. My counterpart has been the Information Technology teacher for the school for over 10 years and often expresses her frustration at trying to teach 35 students how to use Microsoft Word or Excel with only a few working computers that students must wait in line to cycle through and use. After conducting a community needs assessment survey of students in IT classes, it was evident students felt the same strain and frustration. That being said, some of the computers do still work, and I believe disposing of all 11 computers and replacing them is a waste of a valuable opportunity for our community to learn how to utilize resources already on hand with a few small supplements. If we can systematically dispose of entirely useless computers and lingering broken projectors and miscellaneous equipment while better maintaining the still functional computers, we will all have more personal accountability and value for all of our technology. The reason we are requesting 1 desktop and 1 laptop is that teachers regularly complain over having to compete to share computer room space when more than one has a lesson plan which requires any amount of computer use. For this reason having one "portable" computer would help everyone at this large school move around each other.

And so my counterpart approached me about writing a small Peace Corps grant together to acquire two computers to make classes and administrative work easier for the entire school. She has experience with technology, grant-writing, and developing and executing leadership camps for children and digital literacy workshops with parents, and was already prepared and enthusiastic to carry out another digital literacy workshop in which we could utilize new computers with updated content in our lessons. We will supplement the curriculum from her previous trainings with more modern IT curriculum and more practical information we know to be useful in the job market. She has been aware of and willing to commit to the work involved in this grant for over a year now, and students teachers and administrators alike are very excited at the possibility of new computers to use.

Because we have deliberately chosen to supplement already existing programming and equipment rather than creating an entirely new resource center with no precedent for usage or ownership, many concerns for ensuring sustainability are already being mitigated.

The computer room will continue to be most used during the school day for teachers administrators and students having classes or executing brief computer tasks. It is centrally located in the school and is already heavily trafficked with the limited equipment we have now, so I am confident the room will continue to be well maintained and the equipment inside protected. We have contacted and established an understanding with a local computer equipment specialist to come and clean and upgrade our computers at the beginning of the school year every year, so that the computers will last and perform at their highest ability for as long as possible, a service our computers haven't had for many years now. The school will continue to supply paper, printer ink, internet, chalk, cleaning staff, an extra lock and key, and all other necessary materials for the full functioning of the room.

Once we have established the system for reserving technology a day ahead through use of a sign up log, and enforced a requirement that at least 3 classes across the school per week incorporate technology, the system will be easy for our director to maintain. She is carrying out requirements already established by the Ministry of Education (teachers attended a Smart Board training workshop last year without having come in contact with Smart Boards) and enriching our students' learning experience with minimal extra time or effort.

In terms of sustainability of the skills transferred in the Digital Literacy Workshop, I have stated that skills will be transferable from the first direct beneficiaries, the parent participants to their families and communities. I have also explained my hope that my counterpart will be motivated by giving these trainings to retake her former position as a change-agent in our community and take the initiative to have more regular, perhaps yearly digital literacy trainings or leadership conferences as she has had in the past. She is a very impressive and capable woman, and I believe the key to long term growth in our community, and fortunately she enjoys and is fulfilled with her work, and foresees a long future in it.

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS **\$912.37** TOTAL RAISED **\$912.37** GOAL **\$3,192.23**
