

Improving Rural Schools in the Kyrgyz Republic

Natalya Iosipenko, Public Information Services Assistant in the World Bank Office in Bishkek, offers this story.

Imagine living in a village where school buildings are dilapidated, textbooks are rare, and teachers are underpaid and demotivated. How would you help your community to improve the effectiveness and quality of its schools? How would you keep experienced teachers from quitting and attract young teachers to remote outposts?

Rural schools across the Kyrgyz Republic face these challenges. Together with the World Bank, education authorities attempted to address these problems through a US\$15 million project supporting rural education.

A targeted, nationwide teacher fellowship program was developed to attract young people to become teachers in rural areas. Almost 300 new teachers have answered the call.



Guljamal Janybaeva

“It’s a huge problem to bring young people back to the village,” says Guljamal Janybaeva, Aral school principal. “In this case, our former students are coming back and working as teachers after getting a university education. Young professionals in rural areas represent hope for the future.”

Hundreds of rural schools have given existing teachers on-the-job training to upgrade what they know about their subject and how they teach it.

“Our teachers gained a lot of useful methodological knowledge,” says Janybaeva. “However, our biggest achievement and pride is that our students have been among the top winners in national school tests over the last three years.”

Improved performance management systems for teachers and principals were developed and piloted in two regions, along with a new salary scale. As a result, almost 3,000 teachers received financial incentives based on performance.

“These methods allow us to evaluate teachers’ performance,” says Anara Begaliev, school principal in Issyk-kul oblast. “They enable each teacher to conduct an effective self-appraisal to pinpoint where their skills need development. This is a great stimulus for teachers.”



Kanat Sadykov

New standards for strategic planning were developed and applied in pilot schools. They aim to improve student learning by involving staff, students, parents and local authorities.

“The approaches of joint planning at pilot schools have facilitated communities’ involvement in school management,” notes Kanat Sadykov, Minister of Education and Science. “Self-appraisals of school performance and joint school improvement planning help improve learning conditions.”

The Education Ministry recently endorsed a nationwide scaling up of these planning principles.

“Previously, teachers and school administrators had to solve lots of issues related to school maintenance and manage the educational process at the same time,” says Mira Birimbaeva, Talas City Education Department Specialist. “Parents and the local community now have a stronger interest in school life and are more willing to provide support. They help us with some school maintenance so that teachers can focus on raising their professionalism, applying modern teaching methods, and establishing

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better interactions with students.”



Mira Birimbaeva

Through hands-on training, school teams have learned to prioritize tasks, develop budgets and fundraise. They have developed and implemented 576 micro-projects to improve school conditions. Modern environments motivate students to learn.

Schools bought new materials and refurbished laboratories and classrooms: 271 computer classes, 46 resource and 29 multimedia rooms, 13 libraries, 78 methodological rooms, 46 workshops and music classrooms. Twenty dining halls and gyms were built.

In Kara Suu secondary school, a new crafts room draws students who want to pursue their artistic aspirations. In Altymyshbaev school, new music classes are welcomed with excitement by young music enthusiasts. And in Kaimov school, a newly equipped gym attracts dozens of young sports fans who can now sign up for new fitness programs.

Girls in Kumushtak school learn to sew clothes, embroider traditional patterns, and do beadwork in their new crafts room.

“There is no need anymore to send our kids to the city to learn the skills of embroidery and beadwork,” says Fatima Mairykova from Kumushtak village. “My daughter wants to become a fashion designer, and I hope her dream will come true.”

Student per capita financing was developed and piloted to better allocate budget resources and raise the efficiency of the education system overall.



Tatyana Shahvorostova

“We have drastically improved technical resources in our school,” says Tatyana Shahvorostova, Curriculum Department Head in Zubkov village. “Savings resulting from efficient allocation were spent on additional teacher incentives. Over the last two years, school results have improved by 10 percent. Teachers have realized the importance of training for their professional growth.”

School is taught in four languages in the Kyrgyz Republic: Kyrgyz, Tajik, Uzbek, and Russian. And for the first time, textbooks in these languages are available to students. Since the beginning of the project, nearly 1.3 million copies of textbooks were purchased and reprinted, which has greatly increased the country's textbook stock.