Technology Inspiring Peace
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Introduction

Two hours north of Cotonou, Benin’s capital city, is Bohicon, the town where we will conduct our project. We will be working at a school for technology called Centre de Formation Informatique et Bureautique (CEFIB). It is in this school where we want to light a new mantle of peace. We define peace as the access to education and the opportunities that result from learning. Inspiring and educating students promotes peaceful relations across cultures and encourages global harmony. Education brings opportunity, self-reliance, support, and hope for an individual, a family, and a community. Peace is also the cultural exchange and understanding that happens during this project between the students and ourselves and builds international understanding. This proposal focuses on developing student’s interest in technology and their skills on current technology in the world.

Partnerships

The school is led by Monsieur Félicien Agonse. Mr. Agonse first opened his doors to students in 2000. The school experienced some initial success but in 2007 the school ran into trouble when its founder was hospitalized and a shipment of valuable items for the school was stolen. Recently the school started regaining momentum, but it still limited by a lack of resources. Over the years, Agnes Scott College has established a trusted relationship with the school. In the past, computers have been donated for technological education and the relationship between Mr. Agonse, the school’s founder, and Agnes Scott College has been a positive tool to promote education in Benin.

Statement of Need

The school is a two classroom higher-level institution for Beninese high school and university graduates who are computer illiterate. The school’s main goal is to teach students to use programs like Excel, PowerPoint etc., however, the lack of funding for the CEFIB has severely stunted the institution’s ability to achieve its potential. The goal of our project is to develop an advanced technological center to enable these students to have more resources, better engage and have practical lessons on how they can become well-versed, technical citizens of the world. We plan to do this by:
- Providing classroom materials that reflect current technology
- Organizing tutoring sessions on how to use this technology and basic software programs
- Creating binders of step-by-step directions for the content of our lessons
- Providing English lessons for students who may be working with expatriates in Cotonou

Timeline

The project has been scheduled to last for six weeks. Prior to departure, informational binders will be assembled and computer laptops will be purchased (to be carried on the flight). During week one and two, we will work diligently to set-up new resources in the school, establish connections with students, begin basic computer instructions, and begin English lessons. Using the provided funds, we will work with Mr. Agonse to recognize needs of the school and purchase new technological products that are necessary for the students, including additional computers. During computer instruction, we will work alongside students at the computers. For example, we will answer questions, provide directions for computer programs such as Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, or explain common dangers on the
Internet such as spamming. Mr. Agonse has opened a room specifically for English instruction where we will work with students throughout each day with their English writing, speaking, reading, and listening skills. Throughout the third and fourth weeks, we will continue the computer instructions with the use of instruction binders and also continue English lessons. These binders will include step-by-step directions of how to use certain computer programs. Mr. Agonse will select the programs so that his students are learning what is accessible and necessary for their computer literacy and potential career paths. The fifth and sixth weeks will consist of a continuation of computer lessons with emphasis on students’ individual difficulties or specific needs and will include final English lessons.

Applicant’s Role and Expertise

Aba Quagrainie is Ghanaian-raised; thus, will easily adapt to Beninese culture. She has learned French throughout her academic career and is currently fluent in the language. Ghana’s position on the map has also provided her countless experiences with citizens of Francophone West Africa and has prepared her for this time in Benin. Aba is currently enrolled in advanced French classes at Agnes Scott College and is declaring a French major in the coming spring.

Maureen Klein has spent a total of two months in Benin and has become familiar with the people and culture. She first visited Benin in 2010 for a three-week, faculty-led trip during which she stayed with a host family, visited historical sites, and experienced the culture. During this trip, she met Mr. Agonse and his students. She returned to Benin for another three weeks during June of 2012. Mr. Agonse and Maureen discussed the current needs and the improvements that are necessary for the success of the school. Maureen is also enrolled in advanced French courses at Agnes Scott College and is able to easily communicate within a francophone country.

Outcomes

Mr. Agonse currently instructs nineteen students at the school and hopes to increase this number with the access to more resources. His students have chosen to further their education and are very willing to learn new skills. They possess the desire and enthusiasm necessary to continue their studies and acknowledge the skills that they can gain from this expertise. We also intend that the success of this project will allow the school to attract more students in order to continue growth in the community and the growth of the school will help support a larger number of interested young adults.

Assessment Plan To Ensure Sustainability

This program goes beyond providing technical instruction and English language training for the students; we will be equipping them with tools for success in a world that relies heavily on technology. Partnering with the school is the best way to sustain this project. Mr. Agonse intends to integrate our bilingual tutoring sessions (English and French) into his curriculum. With this integration, our hope is that by the end of our stay in Benin, we will not only have expanded the opportunities for his students by providing needed resources and instruction, but will have also challenged them to look beyond their present circumstances, influencing them to continue their education and technological skills.