

Project Proposal: “The Digital Bridge”



Facilitator: “Human Network”

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Project goals: Bridging the digital divide for the children of Jaffa (Israel), simultaneously bridging the cultural divide between Jewish and Arab youth in the suburb. On one hand, the project aims to provide the future generation with basic, and ultimately more advanced, skills in computers and Internet use, while at the same time exposing them to the education and communication potential of the Web. On the other hand, the project employs the skills gained through its activities to build trust and establish effective communication between the Jewish and Arab children. While doing so, the project promotes tolerance and dialogue between the two groups.

Project description: The project was launched for the first time during the academic year 2003-2004 and in the following pattern:

1. The project was conducted in two elementary schools in Jaffa: Hasan Arfe (Arab) Elementary School in the Ajami neighborhood and Hashmonaim (mostly Jewish) Elementary School in Jaffa Gimel neighborhood. Both participating schools played host to two groups of about ten students from 4-5 grades each (totally about 40 children in both schools). The weekly workshops in each school were led by a Hebrew and Arabic speaking couples of male and female tutors.
2. In the weekly workshops, the kids learned about computer and about the Internet. As they experienced using e-mails and online forums, the kids were introduced to the Internet as a communication platform. At the same time they learned to create simple personal websites, using HTML.
3. The educational program was structured to encourage communication among the kids from different schools while creating opportunities for them to get to know each other. Self produced online contests and activities were employed to create a fun and supportive environment for communication. The kids, who have communicated virtually till then, met at the wrap-up event of the project, which also brought together their parents.
4. The 2003-2004 academic year was the first (pilot) year of operation for “The Digital Bridge” and as a result the actual period of activity was shorter than originally planned.





We would like to continue operating the project during the 2004-2005 academic year in the same pattern and at a full scale. Moreover, we would like to expand the program to additional schools in Jaffa and to enrich it with a second year follow up activity:



1. Continuing: In Hasan Arafe and Hasmonaim Elementary Schools there will be two groups of 10 children from the 4th grade participating in the project according to the original guidelines. Given that in 2004-2005 the project will run during a longer period, it will allow two face-to-face meetings between the kids, at the middle and at the end of the academic year.
2. Expanding: Two additional groups will be created in two schools, which did not participate in the project in 2003-2004. Since the remaining elementary schools in Jaffa are smaller than those already participating in "The Digital Bridge", each school will play host to one group of 4th grade children.
3. Enriching: Additionally, Hasan Arafe and Hasmonaim Elementary Schools will play host to one advanced group each. These groups will consist of a subset of children who have participated in "The Digital Bridge" in 2003-2004 and who have advanced from the 4th to the 5th grade.
4. Total number of children, planned to participate in the project during 2004-2005 academic year is 80.



The unique contribution of the project: The 'digital divide' attracts significant attention in the world as well as in Israel. While most of the efforts are invested in providing access to technology, "The Digital Bridge" project aims to bridging the skills gap. Knowing to utilize the information technology efficiently and wisely becomes one of the most significant skills in the modern society. Unfortunately, today most of the children of Jaffa are far behind their peers from more established areas, as to access and skills for ICTs.

Moreover, based on experience of operating "The Digital Bridge" in 2003-2004, using ICT for communication purposes between children (emails, forums, etc.) bares a tremendous potential for advancing co-existence and dialog between the Arab and Jewish population in Jaffa. When the initial acquaintanceship is made virtually, it creates a dialog free of cultural barriers and prejudices so often observed in first face-to-face contact. In this way when the face-to-face meeting does happen, it is much more interesting and "natural" for the children.



Evaluation of the program in 2003-2004 (satisfaction):

Hashmonaim (14 respondents)	1 Not at all	2	3	4	5 Very much	Average (St. dev.)
Are you satisfied with the project activities?				1	13	4.93 (0.27)
Did you learn new things during the project?					14	5 (0.00)
Will you recommend to your friends participating in the project in the future?				1	13	4.93 (0.27)
Hasan Arafe (14 respondents)	1 Not at all	2	3	4	5 Very much	Average (St. dev.)
Are you satisfied with the project activities?	1		1		12	4.57 (1.16)
Did you learn new things during the project?				1	13	4.93 (0.27)
Will you recommend to your friends participating in the project in the future?		2	1	1	10	4.38 (1.15)

Project execution: The project is operated by students in cooperation with the “Price Brodie Initiative in Jaffa”. The executive team consists of a coordinator who is also responsible for content development (1), Hebrew speaking tutors (4) and Arabic speaking tutors (4).

All the tutors in the project are carefully chosen at the beginning of an academic year. Based on lessons gained in the pilot period, all tutors will participate in a preparatory course particularly focusing on unique features of “The Digital Bridge” project.

Project evaluation: Similarly to the evaluation, which took place during the 2003-2004 academic year, all the future activities will be evaluated through questionnaires at the beginning and at the end of the program. The professional team of “Price Brodie Initiative in Jaffa” will assist the “Human Network” team through the evaluation process.

Comments: During the first, “pilot”, year of the project, the model it suggests was proven as feasible and efficient for the particular objectives of “The Digital Bridge”. This is a unique initiative both in terms of the young age of its participants (4th-5th grades) and in terms of its content as promoting tolerance and dialogue between Jews and Arabs in Jaffa.

The coming year is crucial for “The Digital Bridge” since it is going to determine if the initiative will continue acting for the benefit of children in Jaffa, or in other words for the future.



Estimated annual budget for 2004-2005 (NIS)

No.	Item	Sum	Notes
1	Tutors	60000	7500*8
2	Coordination	7500	
3	Contents development	7500	
4	Workshop for tutors	6000	
5	Transportation	3200	400*8
6	Materials	800	
7	Co-existence workshop	2000	
8	Translation to Arabic	1000	
9	Portfolios to children	800	10*80
10	Middle term event	300	
11	Final ceremony	2000	
12	Evaluation (covered by Price Brodie)	0	
13	Professional monitoring and advisory (covered by Human Network)	0	
14	Computers classes (provided by schools)	0	
	Total	91,100	
	Transfer from the last year	6,000	
	Required finance (NIS)	85,100	
	Required finance (\$)	18,716	

About the founders

These are short resumes of the project founders:



Dmitry Epstein

Dmitry was born in Russia and moved with his family to Israel in 1993, where he now lives in Jaffa. He acquired his BA in Economics from the Tel-Aviv University and is currently finishing his Master's degree in Media and Communication studies at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

While studying he has actively participated in various social projects and student activities. He was elected twice to represent the School of Economics in the student council from where he established a tutorial project to help young students, a scholarship fund for sponsoring sports activity for students in need and a learning center for the children of Jaffa, facilitated by the Mendel Community Center. He also worked for the "Perach" project, both as tutor and as coordinator, in the Southern districts of Tel-Aviv. In recognition of these and other activities he was awarded the Tel-Aviv University President's Prize for Students Performing Outstanding Volunteer Work in the Community.

In December 2002, he attended the ITU Asia-Pacific Youth Forum in Hong Kong. As an outcome of the forum, he is now working establishing the "Human Network" for promotion of ideas and facilitation of youth activities to bridge the digital divide.

In the not-too-distant future, Dmitry hopes to continue in post-graduate studies. At the same time, he plans to continue his social activities in technology-related fields.



Jenny Komanovsky

Jenny was born in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1979 and moved to Israel in 1990; she now lives in Tel Aviv. She completed her BA in Computer Science from the Tel-Aviv Jaffa Academic College and presently is about to finish her first year of the Life Sciences B.Sc. in Tel Aviv University.

During high school, she actively participated in various social projects and was elected as head of Student Council in her school. She was also the vice-president of the Tel-Aviv Student Council. For those activities she was granted an "Ironi Alef High School Academic Scholarship".

While studying at college, Jenny took a role in the College Students Council, dealing with academic issues and arranging social activities.

In December 2002, she met Dmitry Epstein, who attended the ITU Asia-Pacific Youth Forum in Hong Kong as the Israeli representative. Together with him, she now participates in promoting ideas and facilitating activities among youth to bridge the digital divide. In October 2003, she attended the ITU World Youth Forum in Geneva.

After graduating from Tel-Aviv University, she plans on an academic career combining the fields of technology and life sciences, and would like to continue contributing to the social fabric of society.



Michael Gofman

Michael is an advanced graduate student at the Tel-Aviv University, Graduate School of Management. He acquired his BA in Economics from the Tel-Aviv University.

While studying for his BA, he worked in the Computation Center at the university, where he built web sites for university units and faculties and web-services for students' use. Previously he took part in creating Net-School and, in particular, in programming sites for studying geography on-line.

During his last year in Economics, Michael was a tutor in the "Shahak" project and worked with a high-school student from a socially-challenged family, teaching him internet programming and design. In October 2003, he attended the ITU World Youth Forum in Geneva.

Michael hopes to continue his education toward a PhD degree and to devote himself to bridging the "digital divide" in Israel.