

America-Iraq School Partners Program
Guidebook
July 1, 2006

MARHABA (“a warm welcome”) to the School Partners Program! This document will be your guide toward a successful and meaningful experience.

Table of Contents

What is the School Partners Program?	2
School Partners Program Director	2
Program Policies	2
How to Begin	3
Method of Communication.....	4
Suggestions for Ongoing Dialog and Activities	4
Sample Teacher letter.....	7
Sample Class letter.....	8
Useful Facts About Iraq	9
Conclusion	9

What is the School Partners Program?

It is a program sponsored and operated by Generation Iraq (www.generationiraq.org) to build understanding and friendship between Iraqi and American children. The program will partner schools in the U.S. and Iraq via email and the Internet to allow correspondence between the students. The goal of the program is to introduce the young people of the two countries and to allow them to learn that their hopes, dreams, and interests are more similar than they might otherwise realize. Its purpose is also to demonstrate to the Iraqi people that they are not alone in their struggle to establish a free and peaceful society.

School Partners Program Director

The Director of the School Partners program is Tamara Quinn, a native of Iraq. She immigrated to the United States in 1973 and attended college at Murray State University, in Kentucky where she majored in Mathematics. She also holds a degree in Accounting from the University of Evansville, Indiana, and will be completing her MBA program in April 2005.

After an absence of thirty years, Tamara returned to Iraq in the fall of 2003 to work with the Coalition Provisional Authority and the Iraqi Reconstruction and Development Council. During this period, she re-connected with her roots and formed the idea of connecting Iraqi schools to American schools. In December 2003 she was able to connect 5 schools in Baghdad to a high school in Union County Kentucky, Ms. Quinn's home for 18 years, for a successful educational exchange.

Upon her return to the U.S., Tamara decided to retire from her career with the Tennessee Valley Authority and dedicate her time to developing and promoting the idea of interaction between the schools of Iraq and the U.S. Additionally, she continues to work on humanitarian assistance programs and other projects for the development of Iraq.

You can contact Tamara Quinn via email at tamara@generationiraq.org or by phone at 423-504-5557.

Program Policies

- The America-Iraq School Partners program has been developed to promote friendship, understanding, increased educational knowledge, and comradeship across the cultural divide between the children of the United States and the children of Iraq.
- Its purpose **is not** to promote any religious or ideological doctrines.

- Please report any inappropriate activity or communication to the director of the program, Tamara Quinn, at: tamara@generationiraq.org
- It is the responsibility of the teacher or other school officials to obtain parental approval, where required, before allowing students to participate.
- There will be no request of personal information beyond the school and classroom program.
- Photos and sample letters may be posted on the internet, or in other media, but will be redacted to protect identity.

The core of the School Partners program is to establish connections and communication between the participating schools. Generation Iraq will invest in the infrastructure needed to support ongoing communication and information exchange including the hiring of Iraqi staff that can translate materials and serve as coordinators and communications liaisons among the participating schools. Generation Iraq will also handle the shipment and distribution logistics associated with any donated goods to be sent to Iraq. However, donations should also include shipping costs.

Additionally, American schools may provide gifts of friendship to their partner schools in Iraq, such as supplies, books or equipment. This is at the discretion of the American school and would be expected to be funded privately by the school's parents, students, local businesses, and community – not by the school itself.

How to Begin

The School Partners program intends to match a school in the U.S. with a counterpart school in Iraq. The intention of this program is to connect the teachers and principles between the two schools as well as the students. Here are some recommendations on how to successfully initiate this conversation:

1. The initial correspondence should originate from the U.S. school.

A letter of introduction from the Principal of the U.S. school to the Iraqi school should be included as part of the initial contact. This letter should welcome the new partnership and suggest that the two schools should work in unison to promote knowledge and understanding of each other's culture.

2. A letter of introduction should be sent by the teacher in the U.S. school to the teacher at the assigned class in Iraq. This introductory letter should include some personal information, such as type of education, how long they have taught, what they like about the possibilities of this program and what they hope to gain. See "Sample Teacher Letter" later in this guidebook.

3. A letter of introduction should be sent from the American class to the Iraqi class, welcoming the partnership. The introductory letter should include the number of students, names, ages, and interests. Each student should write a small paragraph about themselves. It would also be an added benefit to include a digital picture of the students. See “Sample Class Letter” later in this handbook.

Good luck, and most of all remember to have **fun!**

Method of Communication

The method of communication will be by E-mail with **English** as the language utilized.

Suggestions for Ongoing Dialog and Activities

Following the initial introductory exchange it is important that communication occur on a regular basis and that it always be respectful. Following the greetings, it is customary for Iraqi letters to include questions about the health and well being of the other party and wish them good fortune. The basis for positive ongoing dialog is to think about what you would like to know about the recipient and what you would like to tell them about yourself. The letters should be friendly, informal and written in a basic format.

Here are some ideas for both students and teachers/administrators when writing letters.

Ideas for Students (Both Iraqi and American)

- What are your extra curricular activities? Some of these may include sports, such as football, soccer, basketball, baseball and track, or academics, such as debate, forensics, theatre or dance.
- Who is your role model?
- What is your favorite class or subject?
- What is your favorite book? Why did you choose it?
- What kind of music do you listen to?
- What is your favorite food? How do you prepare it?
- What are your aspirations and goals for after school?
- Do you have a spring break? If so, what type of trips or excursions do you take?
- When are your holidays? What are your religious holidays?
- Do you wear uniforms to school?
- Who is your favorite movie star? Who is your favorite singer?
- Do you have a cat, dog, or other domestic animal in your house? What is its name?

Ideas for American Teachers to Iraqi Teachers

- What are your views on democracy and its effects on the educational system in Iraq? Do you think it will improve the system?
- What are the core subjects taught in Iraq?
- Do you have both public and private schools? Co-ed? Single sex?
- How long is the school year? Has it changed from what was previously in place?
- How are the students reacting to the new changes in Iraq? Is counseling needed?
- What impact do you see on women's education?
- Will you have a session in history class or political science dedicated toward teaching democracy? Does the board of education in Iraq plan on having a class focused on teaching democracy alone?
- Do the schools require classes on religion? If so, do they teach tolerance? Do you think it is necessary to have religious classes?

Ideas For Iraqi Teachers to American Teachers

- What do you think about the education system in America? Do you think Iraq should adopt the same type of system?
- Are your history or political science classes dedicating time to explain the current events in the Middle East?
- What are your views on public vs. private schools? Which seem to work better in America?
- Do you know more about Iraq now than before?
- Is your school public or private? Co-ed? Single sex?
- Do you think violence is a problem in American schools?
- Do your students spend a lot of time on computers?

Suggested Educational Ideas:

It is suggested that educational activities between the classes be incorporated to promote greater understanding of each other's culture. Some suggestions include:

- The U.S. class would collectively come up with three questions on the history of the U.S. posed to Iraqi students to see what their answer may be. The Iraqi students would do the same with three questions on the history of Iraq. A comparison of the answers to these questions would help open a dialogue between the classes.

The above can be modified to include geography, math etc.

- Assign essays and compositions about each student's culture from his or her own perspective, and each student's view and understanding of the other culture.

- Embark on a joint video recording program with the result showing acceptance and understanding of similarities and differences between the two cultures.
- Include a public bulletin board to include information, post photographs and notes from the partner school.
- Launch comic magazine club with students in Iraq.

More ideas will be posted on the soon-to-be-launched School Partners Website, at www.generationiraq.org.

Sample Teacher letter

Date

Dear [Mr., Dr., Mrs., Miss][Last name of School Teacher],

I hope this letter finds you and your family in good health. I am happy with the opportunity to be a partner with your class and I look forward to a very constructive educational venture.

I am a graduate of [college name] and have taught for [number of years] at this school. I am [single, married] with [no. of children ages etc.]. Our school is located in [city and State] which is geographically in the [east, center, west] of the U.S. I am looking forward to this partnership because I believe our students will benefit by this interaction and gain an appreciation for the history of Iraq and the Iraqi people.

My class consists of [no. of students, boys, and girls] and I teach [general, math, etc.]. During this year we will be studying [syllabus]. Please let me know the curriculum in your school and your background and interests.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,
[Name of teacher]

Sample Class letter

Date

Dear [Mr., Dr., Mrs., Miss] [Last name of School Teacher],

We hope this letter finds you and your family in good health. We, at [name of school] are happy with this opportunity and look forward to forming a friendship that will last a very long time.

I am [name of teacher in U.S.] and my class consists of [no. of students, boys, and girls]. My students have written short notes and questions to introduce themselves to your classroom. We look forward to your replies.

1. Brandon (male)
I am eleven years old and love to play soccer. Do you play soccer? Are you on a team? What kind of sports do you play?
2. Darlene (female)
Hi, I am Darlene and I am ten years old. I have a beautiful cat named "Oliver". Do you have a pet? What do you feed it?

Etc.

I have included a picture of the students so that your students can become visually acquainted with their friends here in the U.S. My students are excited and eager to get to know their new friends in Iraq.

Best Regards,

[Name of teacher]

Useful Facts About Iraq

- The school year is normally from September 1st through June 30th.
- At levels above elementary school, Iraqi schools are divided by gender.
- Basrah is in the South, Baghdad is in the Center and Suliymaniyah (Sul) is in the North of Iraq.
- In the North of Iraq, the languages spoken include Kurdish, Arabic, Assyrian, and Chaldean. In the center and South of the country, Arabic is the predominant spoken language.

Note: The Iraqi students participating in this program are communicating in English, which is a second or third language for them. Their grammar and spelling may be far from perfect, but their command of English should be appreciated, and not criticized.

Conclusion

Thank you for your interest in this program. Your level of enthusiasm will be translated to the students, and this program can truly be a beginning to a better understanding and appreciation of each student's culture and interests.