Dear Friends,

To say that 2020 was a challenging year is an understatement. But, from tremendous challenges come tremendous rewards. The COVID pandemic taught us a great deal about ourselves as individuals and as a team. It challenged our resiliency, our adaptability, and our commitment. It pushed us to rethink what is important and how we reach and support students and educators. This global pandemic illustrated just how interconnected our world is. As we watched scientists and healthcare workers from around the world work together to address this crisis, it underscored the importance of equipping young people with the skills needed to effectively communicate, collaborate, and navigate through our interconnected world.

The challenges of 2020, from the global pandemic to racial unrest to political polarization, reaffirmed my belief that iEARN-USA’s mission of creating a more peaceful, interconnected and just world by empowering young people to make a positive difference in the world is more important than ever. There is a critical need for people to come together in meaningful ways to break down barriers and find community. iEARN provides the framework and the opportunities to do so.

Through iEARN, young people, guided by educators or other caring adults, make meaningful connections with peers around the world. Through virtual and in-person exchanges, they bridge cultural divides, build lasting friendships, and work collaboratively to make their communities and our world a better place.

A big thank you to our network partners, Global Education Ambassadors, project facilitators, and educators: your contributions and efforts are invaluable to the iEARN community.

On behalf of the iEARN community, staff, and Board of Directors, thank you for supporting our mission and strengthening our future. Your generosity allowed us to find innovative ways to meet the immediate needs of students and educators and to launch new projects that will benefit the entire iEARN network for years to come.

With Gratitude,

STEFANIE ORTIZ-CIDLIK
Executive Director
Skills of the future

U.S. students, especially those in rural and low-income areas, lack the opportunities to have meaningful and productive connections with their international peers. The power to communicate across borders and the ability to collaborate with people of diverse backgrounds is a key 21st-century skill. iEARN-USA addresses this gap by leveraging technology in order to build understanding, empathy, and respect toward other cultures and perspectives.
MISSION + VISION

iEARN-USA empowers young people, educators and their communities through global collaboration and transformative learning to build a more interconnected, peaceful and just world.
OUR APPROACH

Connecting young people, across the world to encourage the breakdown of socio-economic and cultural barriers

Engaging participants as global citizens, connecting them with peers around the world through online, collaborative projects.

Offering professional development opportunities for K-12 educators on how to engage as global citizens and facilitate meaningful cross cultural experiences in their classrooms
Outcomes for Global Competence

- Connect with and become part of a global community.
- Develop openness and respect towards people from other cultures and perspectives.
- Develop and use communication skills to connect with diverse audiences.
- Take collaborative action to make meaningful contributions to their local and global communities.

Through collective learning and action, Iearn youth are seeking creative solutions to make a difference to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.

Education is enhanced, and the quality of life on the planet improved, when young people have the opportunity to use connective technologies to engage in collaboration and meaningful dialogue.
iEARN Educators across the world engage students in more than 100 iEARN virtual projects designed to improve the quality of life on our planet. As they collaborate with other iEARN classrooms, students develop their skills of critical thinking, communication, empathy, problem solving and more.

Through iEARN projects students acquire important 21st century skills and global competencies, allowing them to communicate ideas, recognize other perspectives, and connect their learning to real world issues.

iEARN-USA’s implemented National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) program, an initiative of the U.S. Department of State that seeks to foster international cooperation and mutual understanding.

NSLI-Y offers merit-based scholarships for American youth to study critical languages abroad for a summer or academic year. U.S. high school students then have the opportunity to study Hindi, Arabic, Korean, and Chinese (Mandarin) languages.

iEARN-USA continued to partner with a consortium of organizations to implement the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program, an initiative of the U.S. Department of State. YES brings high school students from countries with significant Muslim populations to live and study in the United States for an academic year. iEARN-USA worked with international partners to recruit students from Bangladesh, Cameroon, Israel Arab Communities, Liberia, Mali, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and Suriname. iEARN worked with American Councils, the State Department, and embassies to repatriate all students from April to August.
As the Covid-19 pandemic impacted schools and educators across the world, iEARN-USA pivoted and adapted in response, implementing new programs to meet the immediate needs of teachers and students. The iEARN team swiftly adjusted plans to accommodate the growing need for virtual educational opportunities and teacher training and networking through new and innovative programming!
Rethinking Language Learning

NSLI-Y scholars on the 2019–2020 academic year program returned to the U.S. prematurely. iEARN-USA ensured the safe, early return of 25 students from South Korea and Taiwan. Despite the program being unexpectedly cut short:

Participants met the program goals for language proficiency growth.

87.5%

This program offers cultural experiences and community service opportunities, which fosters their skills in and knowledge of global competencies and citizen ambassadorship.
“I have been able to connect with people I met through my host family as well as through general networking and just making new friends! Without NSLI-Y I would have never been able to experience these new relationships and meet new communities.” — iEARN Student, 2020 NSLI-Y
Collaboration for Students

iEARN-USA hosted its 3rd Annual Virtual Project Exhibition, a celebration of the work and outcomes of educators and students around the world who completed iEARN projects related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Each presentation, a combination of inspiring videos, words, and powerpoint presentations, was a testimony to the commitment that iEARN educators have to improving their students’ global competency skills and students’ eagerness to connect and learn together with their peers in other countries.

46 COUNTRIES 216 ATTENDEES

iEARN partnered with AMIDEAST to host the Design Thinking for YES Workshop. This workshop enhanced and expanded on 25 YES alumni's tools, skills, and knowledge in strategic problem solving, solution-based approaches, implementing creative project ideas, and cross-cultural collaboration in order to expand the impact of YES alumni projects around the world.

103% INCREASE IN THEIR CONFIDENCE TO USE DESIGN THINKING TO CREATE SOLUTIONS IN THEIR COMMUNITY
DIGITAL STORYTELLING

This ten-day immersive experience engaged high school students from the U.S. and Morocco in self-exploration, storytelling and digital technology skills. The goals of this workshop were:

- increase mutual understanding between U.S. and Moroccan secondary school students.
- create a safe space environment for participants to question their previous conceptions of culture.
- ignite curiosity by sharing aspects of their own identity.

The Digital Storytelling Workshop equipped the participants with new skills to tell their stories, build awareness for issues they feel passionate about, and continue to better our world. The process of identifying their own struggles and sharing them with others enhanced the awareness of the participants regarding their own values.

73% of students had never participated in an international exchange program before.

90% of participants would recommend the Digital Storytelling Workshop.

This program was supported by the Stevens Initiative, which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, with funding provided by the U.S. government, and is administered by the Aspen Institute.
Even with so many difficulties in giving classes online, I received all the support from the facilitators! This experience was wonderful and transforming!” - iEARN Educator

SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

iEARN 101, a course designed to prepare educators to implement iEARN projects and virtual exchange, was expanded to a self-guided workshop offering convenient access to educators with a heavy workload and limited availability for live sessions.

In collaboration with Partners of the Americas, the Connecting Teachers, Connecting Classrooms program brought together teachers and students from the U.S. and Latin America for structured training and networking, aligned with an introductory virtual exchange project for their classes.

10 TEACHERS

190 STUDENTS

91% agreed that “this program has helped me prepare for global collaboration and project work”
Wednesdays with the World

A six-week webinar series aimed to support teachers who were forced to switch from classroom to online teaching due to COVID-19. Each week, guest iEARN facilitators shared mini-lessons from iEARN projects illustrating how they can enhance remote learning and increase student engagement and tips and tools for creating an engaging virtual classroom.

Hello World

iEARN-USA offered U.S. teachers free membership and access to our Hello World Learning Circle, increasing teacher membership by 5%. In each learning circle, 5–6 classrooms were matched in structured virtual exchanges focused on sharing culture and information about the challenges due to the pandemic.

Educator Parlour Chats

The network of iEARN classrooms around the world held informal, virtual conversations with each other involving small groups of students. These sessions provided emotional and practical support to educators, as they were encouraged to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on their learning communities, strategies they used to engage students in online learning, and possible iEARN project partnerships.
As the U.S. was experiencing quarantines and stay at home orders, simultaneously across the world governments issued lockdowns preventing YES alumni from their normal alumni projects and workshops. In order to engage alumni, in 2020 iEARN-USA developed and implemented three virtual alumni workshops to provide alumni with an opportunity to develop professionally and connect and learn with their global peers, despite stay at home orders.

From March 30 to April 10, iEARN-USA hosted a Virtual Alumni Leaders Training for 53 YES alumni from 31 countries. Alumni attended sessions led by professionals in the field from a wide range of topics, from monitoring and evaluation, to grant writing, to program design. 98% of participants reported satisfaction with the workshop, and 98% said that they felt part of a global community, despite the lockdowns.
BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE WORLD

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), iEARN-USA hosted a weeklong workshop on disability rights, using the Academy Award winning documentary film, Crip Camp, as the cornerstone of the workshop. The film served as the platform to launch a series of virtual events about disability rights and advocacy; events included a film discussion, keynote speaker panel, which included contributors from the film, and fireside chats.

98% of participants reported an increase in their knowledge of disability rights and 94% of participants reported that they are more motivated to implement disability-focused and/or inclusive projects in their own community and country. Overall, participants reported an increase in their skills to advocate for the rights of disabled people.
COMMITTED TO GLOBAL LEARNING

NEW PROGRAM LOADING...

We are proud to be partnered with the GBH Educational Foundation, a Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) affiliate in Boston, and iEARN Orillas in Puerto Rico to create the Design Squad Latinx (DSL) program.

The focus on Latinx students comes at a time when they are disproportionately underrepresented in STEM education and careers—only 7% of adults in the STEM job cluster are of Hispanic/Latino origin (Pew Research Center, 2017). Latino students often do not see the synergy between engineering and their own personal interests, daily lives, or social and cultural practices. The program will to counter this phenomenon by testing a strengths-based approach to learning that will engage students by having them utilize their own personal and cultural experiences to connect with traditional engineering curriculum.

“Considering it was an online workshop, my expectations were exceeded. The format allowed for personalized learning through breakout rooms and one on one sessions, despite being conducted remotely.” - iEARN Student

“I learned that communication, collaboration, and teamwork are needed to work in a group.” - iEARN Student

iEARN-USA
International Education and Resource Network
FINANCIALS

Income
Total 2020 Income 3,008,249.87

Expenses
Total Expenses 2,912,560.42

*unaudited financial statement
IN GRATITUDE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Hady Amr, Director
Hisham Anwar, Director
Mona Eraiba, Director
Alessia Falsarone, Director
Arun Kumar, Director
Barry Kramer, Director
Margaret Riel, Director
Jason Van Heuke, Director
George Warnock, Director

PARTNERS

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the US Department of State.
American Councils for International Education
American University
Great Blue Hill GBH (formerly WGBH) – PBS broadcasting family
Brodsky Family Foundation
Copen Family Fund
Posner-Wallace Foundation
Steven’s Initiative