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10:48 a.m., July 23, 2004--Twelve Jordanian teachers of English are learning new classroom techniques and methodology, while also experiencing American family life, this summer at UD's English Language Institute (ELI). They are participating in a six-week program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Fulbright Teacher Exchange Branch of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.



UD project coordinator Baerbel Schumacher (left) and orientation coordinator Brett Tomashek (right) discuss the day's itinerary with Jordanian educators (from left) Muna Abu-Murrah, Eyad Al-Hiarey, Eman Sanouri and Mus'ab Abkal.

As they finish up their last two weeks, another group—12 educators from Morocco—are beginning a six-week stay at ELI with a similar program specifically tailored to their roles as trainers and supervisors of teachers of English.

The program is a major initiative of the state department to reach out to professionals in countries in the Middle East, according to Scott Stevens, ELI director. Approximately 100 schools submitted proposals and ELI's project was selected as best, he said.

"We have had several meetings with our liaisons in Washington, and there is a high level of involvement by the state department. We have visited both countries and their ministers of education. Both countries are undergoing major curriculum reform to teach English, which has been shown to be linked to economic development," he said.

In Jordan, the teachers pointed out, education is an important priority and learning English is mandatory beginning with first grade. This group mainly teaches English to middle school students. They are attending workshops and observing English classes at ELI and English as a Second Language classes in the area. The educators will share what they have learned with colleagues in Jordan during a capstone conference.


Another priority in Jordan is modern technology, which is emphasized by their king, Abdullah II. Unlike some groups who come to ELI, the Jordanians have good computer skills, which is a plus, Stevens, project director, said.

The classes the educators teach in Jordan are generally large. Eman Sanouri, who teaches in the capital of Aman, and Mus'ab Abkal, who teaches in Maan, Jordan's largest city, have approximately 40 students in each of their classes. Eyad Al-Hiarey, who teaches in a village, has



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smaller classes but teaches English to grades four, five, 10, 11 and 12.

The group has had a busy itinerary, which included a week in Washington D.C., visiting dignitaries such as U.S. Sen. Joseph Biden, the Jordanian ambassador, and Tom Farrell, deputy assistant secretary for academic programs at the state department. They also were greeted by state senators in Dover and honored at a reception with UD President David P. Roselle. The group also toured Philadelphia historic sites, and a joint trip to New York is planned for both groups of educators.

Thanks to TV and movies, the teachers said they had some familiarity with American life. Sanouri, who has a brother in Minneapolis, has visited the United States a number of times, and Abkal spent a summer in Canada taking a technology course.

The teachers were housed in Christiana Towers for part of their stay but during the last two weeks will live with American families. They spent the Fourth of July with their host families, becoming acquainted with them and with the traditional holiday celebration, including cookouts and fireworks.

"The home stay adds an important dimension to their experience. They go behind the curtain of academic and formal presentations and learn about family life in the United States," Stevens said.

The teachers have been pleased with the warm welcome they have received, Stevens said.

Abkal summed up the group's reaction saying, "We're glad to be here; it's a good program and a good experience."

Baerbel Schumacher, program manager of professional and continuing studies, is project coordinator with Katherine Schneider, ELI associate director, as academic coordinator and Brett Tomashek, a history teacher at Newark High School, as orientation coordinator.

Article by Sue Moncure
Photo by Kevin Quinlan



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