

ELI hosts 41 Middle Eastern educators

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12:07 p.m., July 31, 2006--Forty-one educators from Jordan, Syria, Morocco and Egypt, most of whom have never been in the U.S. before, are taking part in a State Department and UD English Language Institute (ELI) program this summer designed to enhance their teaching skills while providing them and the Americans they meet with firsthand knowledge of each other.

ELI's 2006 Partnership for Learning: English as a Foreign Language Teacher Training Program, funded by the State Department, welcomed 19 teachers from Syria and Jordan to UD on June 17. Since then, they have learned new teaching methods, lived for two weeks with U.S. host families, visited a senior center, spent a day in New York City, attended summer school and summer camp, taken a one-week escorted trip to Washington, D.C., to meet representatives from the State Department and other government and private sector agencies, visited historic and cultural sites and toured model schools for teaching English as a second language.

A second group of 22 teachers from Morocco and Egypt, arrived July 10 and will leave for home Aug. 18.

Each group of educators participates in a six-week training institute that focuses on new techniques for teaching English as a second language while being immersed in American culture. At the end of their stays, each group organizes a two-day conference displaying the new teaching techniques they've learned at ELI.

Rozina Damanwala, a program officer for the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, attended first such conference on July 24. She said projects such as the "partners program" are happening all over the country.

"This is one of several initiatives to provide professional development opportunities for Middle Eastern and African educators, especially in the area of English language development," Damanwala said. "It's also a way to improve public diplomacy and strengthen mutual understanding. When people meet each other face to face, they get a better understanding of each other. Exchanges are one of the most important tools in getting to understand a country and its people," Damanwala said.



After their graduation ceremony, the 19 teachers from Syria and Jordan who completed the six-week course at ELI got together for a class photo with their instructors.

Scott Stevens, ELI director, spoke to the group telling them about a dedicated teacher who was able to change the course of two lives through her dedication and love. He told them about twin boys, born



Rozina Damanwala (left), a program officer for the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, discusses the Partnership for Learning program with Jihan Ibrahim Diwan, a teacher from Syria; Baerbel Schumcher, ELI program coordinator; and Rania Mohamed Ghazi Helal, another teacher from Syria.



The teachers from Jordan and Syria have been keeping a blog [www.udel.edu/eli/P4L] on which they've recorded their experiences in the classroom and their impressions of the American institutions they've visited. [Click here](#) to see a few excerpts.

On Wednesday, July 26, after the Jordanian and Syrian participants had completed their coursework and two-day conference, they received certificates of completion at a ceremony held at the Trabant University Center.

autistic, who were written off as uneducable until one teacher dedicated herself to working with them, changing the course of their lives.

Stevens told the teachers that they also are the kind of teachers who won't give up on students attempting to learn English. "You, too, came out of love--love for the profession, love for your students and perhaps even a more noble kind of love for humanity. I think that many of you believe, as I do, that if we can all begin to share a common language, then perhaps, we can begin to understand those around us who seem so different, maybe we can learn to reason together and put an end to generations of violence and bloodshed. In teaching English, perhaps you teach peace as well," he said.

Baerbel Schumcher, ELI program coordinator, told the program participants that she had seen their confidence has grown since they came to America. "I see you going home with a different sense of yourselves as teachers and your anticipation as to how your students will react to your new teaching techniques," she said.

Ola Suhil Abdo from Amman, Jordan, said when she first arrived in Delaware, she was looking forward to going home, but, at the end of her stay, she said she felt just the opposite. She called her time in the U.S. "a dream" that she will never forget. She said the U.S. is "a furnace" where cultures melt and come together. "Every member of this group has reserved a corner of my heart," she said.

Each of the educators who came to UD are required to provide training for their colleagues at home and organize a national conference next spring in their home countries that reflects what they learned in America.

Article by Barbara Garrison
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