

THE PROJECT

The Madrasati Palestine School Networks Project, a partnership between Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA), Teachers College Columbia University and Madrasati Palestine, was a school improvement project implemented in 22 schools in East Jerusalem over a three-year period from 2011-2014. The goal was to enrich and enhance the education experience in the schools through professional development programs by improving teaching and learning in four subject areas: Mathematics, Science, Arabic and English writing, and strengthening the instructional leadership and coaching skills of principals and supervisors.

The core work included four interdependent components:

I. Professional Development for Teachers

Teachers participated in a series of workshops that built on one another, and addressed subject matter topics within the national curriculum that the teachers identified as being difficult for students. The workshops provided opportunities to redesign lessons and incorporate high-impact pedagogical practices. The redesigned lessons were then taught in the weeks or months immediately following the workshops.

II. Instructional Leadership for Principals and Supervisors

All principals and education supervisors, serving the schools in the networks, participated in workshops. This strengthened administrative support for the use and adaptation of new practices in the schools and enabled school leaders to spread new practices across their schools.

III. Site Visits

Site visits by project staff supported teachers and school leaders as they implemented new practices and built communities to support continuous improvement. During each visit, project staff conducted classroom observations and met with teachers to learn about their successes and problems as they tried new practices with their students.

IV. Capacity Building of Local Partners

They established organizational routines for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of the professional development. They set up a system to identify areas of strength and weakness and to plan future professional development that would support cultures of instructional improvement in the schools.



THE FRAMEWORK

Based on CPRE-TC's design principles, the work of the Madrasati Palestine School Networks Project was focused on the use of adaptive instruction and other high impact practices that have shown to produce learning gains in diverse cultural settings. The core design principles include:

- The use of evidence-based programs and practices.
- Provision of high-quality, sustained professional development focused on the content that teachers are required to teach, and the topics that teachers and students find most problematic.
- Respect for teachers as professionals that recognizes their importance, and the difficulty and uncertainty of their work.
- An insistence that educators' participation in the project be voluntary.
- Working with practitioners over time to support transfer of knowledge and skill as well as allowing time for implementation and adaptation.
- Collaboration with strong instructional partners, experienced at working with teachers.
- Building local capacity through a collaborative approach to the design and delivery of professional development that enables the local partner to take increased responsibility over time and sustain the work beyond the life of the project.

THE OUTCOMES

115 teachers, 34 supervisors, and 21 principals completed the program. Consistent improvements in practice were observed by project staff such as:

- Previously isolated schools became active members of more cohesive networks that promoted open exchange of ideas and practices.
- Principals and supervisors began using more systematic approaches to support teachers to improve their practice.
- Educators were able to develop more realistic goals about improvement of school and student outcomes.
- Teachers were taking more time to design lessons, collaborate on lesson planning, and incorporate more student-centered and technology-based activities in their classrooms.

Participant Testimonials:

We started these workshops as we did all other workshops, hesitant at first, but we grew to love and enjoy them... because of the fantastic engagement [with the trainers and organizers] and the benefits we gained from the workshops.

- **Mohammed Mouqbel, Principal**

I noticed over the past three years that the teachers who participated in the workshops are highly motivated and get sheer pleasure from working with their students, serving not as lecturers, but rather as mentors and facilitators in the students' learning process.

- **Suhair Shawwar, Science Supervisor**

I used to find science lessons boring and the content difficult to understand because the teacher used to give us long and boring lectures. Now, he uses many strategies and interactive activities during the lesson that make me feel that the lesson is interesting, exciting, and relevant to students. It really is fun to go to school now.

- **Student, 9th grade**

The workshops were unique in their blending of theoretical knowledge with practical application of content... They emphasized collaboration between the teacher, principal, and student. The program had a big impact on increasing the motivation of teachers to improve their content knowledge in science education by encouraging teachers to take responsibility for their professional development and guiding them on how to implement evaluation tools and new teaching strategies in the classroom.

- **Kifaya Hamdan, Teacher**



THE PARTNERS



The Consortium for Policy Research in Education at Teachers College, Columbia University (CPRE-TC).

CPRE unites researchers from seven of the leading research institutions in the United States in an effort to improve elementary and secondary education. CPRE at Teachers College seeks to reduce inequities in the quality of education in the United States and internationally by making research more accessible and usable for educators, by designing tools and professional development experiences based on research evidence, and by encouraging researchers to focus on studying and solving core problems of practice.

Madrasati Palestine

Madrasati Palestine is an initiative launched by Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah in 2010 that strives to comprehensively enrich the educational landscape in East Jerusalem. Madrasati Palestine currently works closely with 22 schools to enhance the role of the student as an effective member in the community, to empower and inspire teachers, and to ensure healthy, interactive and safe environments in the schools. School renovation is carried out under the auspices of the Jordanian Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. The educational programs include: safe schools, healthy schools, technology and innovation and professional development programs, where Madrasati Palestine draws on the expertise and experience of sister affiliations.

Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA)

Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA) is an independent non-profit organization committed to the vision of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah of empowering educators with the skills, recognition, and support necessary to excel in their classrooms, as well as promoting excellence in teacher education and policy deliberation in Jordan and throughout the region. QRTA was launched in 2009 under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah and in partnership with Columbia University's Teachers College (TC), Columbia University Middle East Research Center (CUMERC), and the Jordanian Ministry of Education.



CONTACT US

There's nothing better than working with good people. If you want to speak with us about a specific project, explore future collaborations, or have questions for us, please reach out:

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The organizers and instructors of this program were fantastic and we eagerly awaited every meeting.

- Rasha Abu Qalbain, Teacher



MADRASATI PALESTINE SCHOOL NETWORKS

A partnership between the Teachers College, Columbia University, Madrasati Palestine, and Queen Rania Teacher Academy