

ACCESS JOURNAL

VOL. 01, ISSUE. 01, JULY, 2020



GEIST
INTERNATIONAL
FOUNDATION

EXCELLENCE IN TRANSFORMING IDEAS

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Publication	: July 2020
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English Access Microscholarship Program, a flagship program of the U.S. Department of State has been run in more than 85 countries since 2004. Apart from enriching the 13-18 years old underprivileged students with U.S. culture and values, opportunities are also provided so that the students learn how to communicate effectively and efficiently in English. Besides, the Enhancement and Intensive Sessions of the program helps the students test their critical thinking, creative, cultural competencies and technological skills. It makes a person become a leader who can meet the challenges of the 21st century with his/her inherent and obtained qualities.

Access program is running in many countries. Each of the country has its own diversity in terms of students' ethnicity, educational background, family background, culture, and language. Challenges, best practices, success stories, classroom activities, enhancement, and intensive sessions are not similar in most of the countries. In addition to that, students' areas of improvement are also different based on their field of interest.

Access Journal will be a platform for sharing the knowledge, experiences, success stories, diary, challenges, event memories and many more. Through this Journal we'll try to compile much needful information for the Access teachers, students, alumni as well as providers. Tales of the best practices will inspire the other Access teachers to restructure the contents and activities of the programs more excitingly. The challenges while conducting the program, adaptive measures taken to address the challenges and the pragmatic measures taken ultimately will help the target stakeholders to have a much deeper insight. Even, the teachers and program content designers will also get ideas about innovative ways to plan events which they have not explored yet from the write up shared in this journal.

Access Journal can help a student in many folds. It will increase vocabulary and reading skills. Sharing a story through a write up will help a student to increase his/her writing skills, thinking skills as well as communication skills. Students can learn from each other and also find different areas of concentrating their focus which they can apply in their next level of study, family life and also in job life. The variety of writings will inspire a current Access student to get motivated and keep pace on his/her current activities to reach the target.

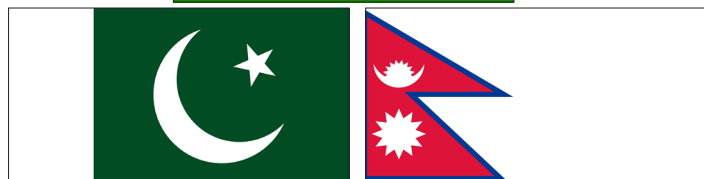
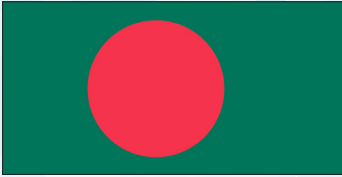
Access Journal is the output of mutual collaboration, friendship, and commitment for the community service. When we reach out to the teachers, students and alumni they cordially cooperate with us with their valuable advice, write up, network and many more to make it happen and also to give it its actual look. Considering all the challenges and busy schedule, the contributors of this journal have done a tremendous job for the global Access community. We express our sincere gratitude to them. We have tried our level best to get the best output in terms of all areas of this issue and hope to do more better in the next one.

Finally, we are thankful to the U.S. Department of State for creating and realizing such an amazing program for the underprivileged. Because of this program, we are getting some inspiring social leaders who can change the world in the most sustainable way. Access Journal will continue its journey including those cases regularly without altering.

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GEIST International Foundation is Thankful to



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The English Access Microscholarship Program (Access)



The English Access Microscholarship Program (Access) is a two-year global scholarship program supported by the U.S. Department of State that provides a foundation of English language skills to bright, economically disadvantaged students, primarily aged 13 to 20 through After-School classes with Enhancement Activities, and Intensive Sessions. Aforementioned after-school instruction occurs before school, after school, or on weekends and generally takes place 1-5 days a week with each session typically lasting 1-3 hours per day. Enhancement activities are in addition to regular After-school

- Provide English-language training.
- Share American culture and values.
- Identify students' appropriate career paths based on individual skills, personality traits, and aspirations.
- Provide supplemental training in soft skills to prepare the young participants to be dynamic, motivated, and conscious recruits.
- Build confidence and leadership skills through targeted civic education training that links with future employability.



instruction. These activities are opportunities for students to practice their English and learn new skills which include taking part in exciting events and showcasing their talents to the world, enhancing their literacy and knowledge in computer and technology, experimental learning activities that focus on U.S. culture and values, Professional Development, and Community Service. During the intensive sessions, students attend the program for 3-8 hours a day, and take part in sessions conducted by knowledgeable and competent educators which encompass different skills required to become a Global Citizen.

Program Goals

The goal of the Access Program is to prepare students who have minimal knowledge of English, with effective communication and critical thinking skills through meaningful interaction, cooperative learning strategies, and real-life contexts. We hope these skills will lead to better jobs, educational opportunities, and the ability to participate in and compete for future exchanges and study in the United States.

- Provide opportunities for students to use their new skills in a positive and supportive setting.
- Offer opportunities for company visits for young participants with a range of local employers.
- Develop the English Language Teaching (ELT) skills of teachers and their ability to guide youth in identifying appropriate career paths and contributing to their communities through civic engagement.

To achieve this, the program is free of charge to participating students. Furthermore, materials (books, paper, markers, etc.) are provided by the U.S. Embassy.

Program Design

The goal of the Access Program is to equip students, who possess minimal knowledge of English, with effective communication and critical thinking skills through meaningful interaction, cooperative learning strategies, interest-appropriate activities, and real-life contexts.



Access Programs generally have three components:

- 1) After School Instruction (mandatory)
- 2) Enhancement Activities (mandatory)
- 3) Intensive Sessions (optional)

Access students will receive a minimum of 360 instruction hours reasonably distributed over the two-year program. This means that the number of hours should not be fewer than 180 in each academic year. As an example, a group could have 260 hours of After School Instruction, 40 hours of Enhancement Activities, and 60 hours of Intensive Online hours cannot replace 360 face-to-face hours, but online materials could supplement the program. Students are organized into Access classes according to their language proficiency levels and a two-year age range,

Selection Process

- The selection process will be in the students' native language
- Application forms will have questions requesting the name, age, name or number of school/other educational institution as well as questions about parents/guardians and number of children in families
- Students will have to provide documents verifying their status of economic impoverishment
- A representative of the U.S. Embassy/Consulate will be included as a member of the final selection panel

Program Location



[e.g. 13-15-year -old, 14-16-year- old, 17-19-year-olds, etc.).

Recruiting Students

- Students must be between 13 and 18 years of age on the first day of the program
- Students must be economically disadvantaged

The program has run in Armenia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Columbia, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Ukraine, the West Bank/Gaza, and many other locations.

Access program in Bangladesh

The U.S. Department of State implements the Access program with the assistance of in-country educational providers. In-country educational providers communicate with U.S. Embassy staff to plan an effective and efficient Access program with the key focus on the program goals. In Bangladesh, the Access program started its journey in 2004 with the Provider Language Proficiency Center (LPC) in Dhaka. Now it is widely expanded in many divisions. At present Access program is running in Dhaka, Sylhet, Chattogram and Cox's Bazar. In addition to LPC, EHDS (Empowerment and Human Development Society) & GEIST (Global Educators Initiative for Sustainable Transformation) International Foundation is working as the provider of the Access program in Bangladesh. About 300 underprivileged students from the National curriculum, Madrasha & Technical-Vocational background are currently studying under this scholarship program. Ms. Raihana Sultana, an official from the U.S. Embassy, Dhaka is the key mentor of Access since its inception. Proudly, a considerable and substantial contributions in community development are made by the Access alumni in Bangladesh.

Access Program & GEIST

GEIST, state alumni teacher headed nonprofit organization, have started their journey with Access program from 2018. For the first



time the students under the vocational and technical institutions are involved in the Access Program. Our After School instructions were started in January 2019 and since then we are conducting regular After-school instructions each Friday-Saturday from 9 am to 11:45 am with a 15 minutes break. To develop English skills and in order to realize the optimum outcome. the students are taught with the help of Hybrid model where traditional and online classes are blended with flipped and virtual classes. Project-based and Content-based pedagogical instruction are helping to increase their collaborative spirit, critical thinking, creativity and tolerance. Interaction with a native English speaker both at virtual and face to face session makes them confident towards communication. A variety of Enhancement activities- Media literacy, Developing Core skills, New year celebration,

Earth day celebration, Halloween celebration, Thanks Giving Day celebration, Christmas Celebration, Heritage awareness- were the notable activities of them. Community awareness towards the restoration of our mother nature and also their own Heritage encourages them to think about the community and share their thoughts and ideas with the community.

Online Participation in the English Access Microscholarship Program

Access Program HQ is a Facebook Page for Access students, alumni, and teachers. This is a place where Access participants from across the globe can come together and discuss things important to anyone.

Conclusion

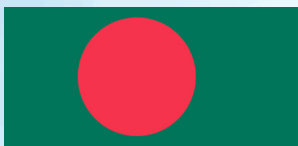
Access aims to help students acquire the job and life skills they need to succeed by participating in high-quality English language classes and activities delivered by experienced and caring teachers. There are many components and steps in launching an Access program, the rewards are wonderful and impressive. The students gain confidence and knowledge and teachers gain skills.



Reference

<https://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/english-access-microscholarship-program>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_English_Access_Microscholarship_Program
<https://www.worldlearning.org/program/english-access-microscholarship-program/>
www.geistfoundation.org

- Samio Ahmed Bhuiyan, Access Admin, GEIST



The South Asian Access Summit: An event of Empowerment

The South Asian Access Summit was held on November 13-19, 2019 at Kathmandu, Nepal. Regional English Language Office (RELO) under the funding support from the U.S. Department of State hosted the South Asian Access Summit. About 150 participants which include Access teachers, Access alumni, Access program coordinators, Access officials from U.S. Embassy Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka joined in these seven days long South Asian Access Summit. The whole summit planned for professional development as well as

best practices in developing and implementing needs-based community service projects, identifying and using social media to promote and advocate for projects, and connecting with colleagues locally, regionally, and internationally.

By the end of the Access Summit, participants developed a proposal for a needs-based community-service project that connects communities regionally and includes a plan for using media to promote and advocate for their project.



networking among the Access community in South Asia. Special sessions were arranged separately for the Access Teacher group and the Access alumni. For the teacher group, Mr. Ryan Brux, Ms. Jennifer Borch and Ms. Caitlin Downs from the U.S.A. joined as the mentor on three different issues which include "Service Learning", "Creating Virtual learning communities" and "Media Literacy".

About Access

The Access program is one of the most important English language education and public diplomacy programs of the U.S. Embassy. The Access program provides bright, under-privileged youth with English language skills, leadership skills, and confidence to continue and excel in their education and positively impact their communities. Through the Access program, teachers, students, and their communities learnt more about American values and promote mutual understanding.

Objectives of the program (South Asian Access Summit)

The Access Summit brought together 134 teachers and alumni from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka to participate in an 8-day series of workshops to discuss and learn

The Access Summit is a collaboration of the Regional English Language Offices in Islamabad, Kathmandu, and New Delhi to promote stronger regional collaboration and relationships.

Program Overview

The opening session began at 8:00 am Wednesday, November 13 in the Malla Plaza in the Malla Hotel.

In the South Asian Access Summit, all the participants were divided into 4 groups: 3 groups of 28-29 teachers, and 1 group of 48 alumni. Each day, the groups rotated between sessions on Service- Learning (SL), Connecting Communities (CC), Media Advocacy (MA), and a resource session in which participants shared examples of best practices in planning and implementing community service projects, learning about resources and best practices in promoting projects from U.S. Embassy staff, and planning and developing proposals for their final project. During the participant sharing sessions, alumni focused on how they have leveraged the skills they acquired during the Access program after graduating. Alumni presentations were divided by country, with each country having 45 minutes to present. Teachers also presented best practices from their Access teaching. Each teacher took 10 minutes to share a best practice.

Every day after the official sessions, participants got the opportunity to work on their projects. In the evenings' special events were organized by the English Language Fellows which allowed participants to relax, have fun, and get to know each other.

On November 16 or 17 all participants joined a service-learning project developed by English Language Specialist Ryan Brux and the Nepal English Language Teachers' Association. This project was a practical example of how to develop a needs-based community service project. It was an opportunity to team-build and network with colleagues.

On November 19, participants finalized their project proposals and presented them to the group for feedback. Finally, there was a closing ceremony followed by a cultural night event in which participants shared their experiences and culture with their colleagues. Most of the participants were accommodated at the Malla Hotel.

Ms. Jennefar Borch empowered Access teachers with a variety of educational technologies like Screencasting [A screencast is a video recording of what's happening on your computer monitor, often with annotations and narration], Edmodo, Edublog and many more.

Ms. Caitlin Downs focused on different issues on Social Media Platform to make Participants to connect with others and begin to build their professional networks using social media, a basic understanding of different social media functions, rights and responsibilities of using social media. She introduces different applications of FACEBOOK, TWITTER, INSTAGRAM for use of Access teachers for their networking. She emphasized on developing a Social Media Campaign and Strategy where the Participants shared PSAs and reflect on the use of videos to promote their service-learning projects.

Mr. Ryan focused on Service-Learning to Provide hands-on and high-energy activities. On Saturday all the participants including the official joined the Service Project on Bagmati Clean-Up

Campaign, One of the longest cleaning campaigns in Nepal, now in its 339th consecutive week!

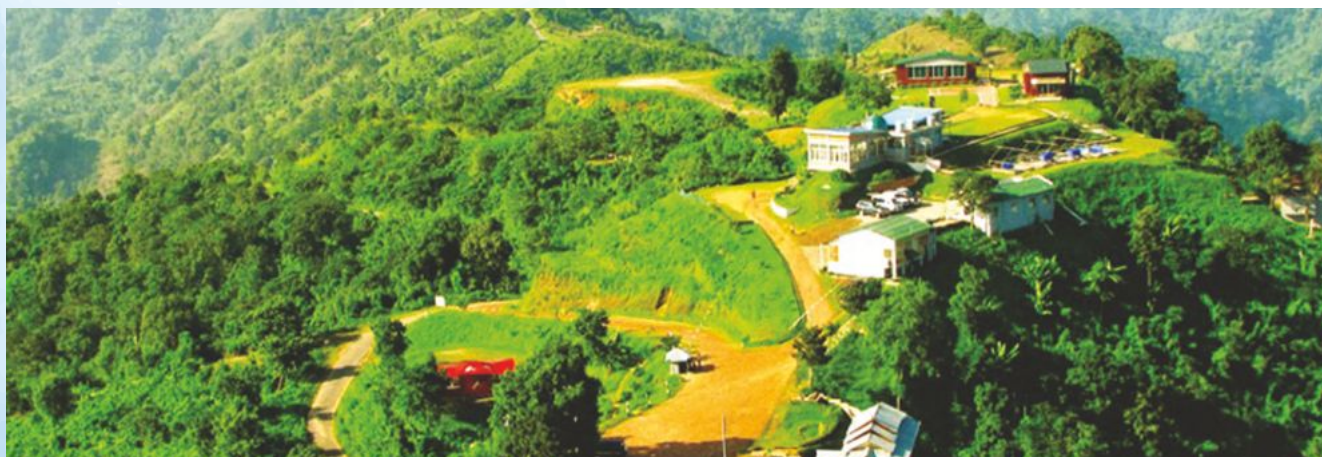
Conclusion:

During the South Asian Access Summit, we had the opportunity to interact with experts in service-learning, digital literacy and advocacy, and community building and to learn the best practices in developing, promoting, and sustaining needs-based community service projects. In addition to that we had an unique opportunity to learn from colleagues and alumni from South Asia, to create regional support networks, and to develop international relationships between communities. The opportunities of joining South Asian Access Summit 2019 provides me not only to learn the skills and knowledge to enhance my teaching and management skills but also the inspiration to share my experiences with the colleagues and communities here in Bangladesh. We have designed some plans and programs about how the skills we learned from the Access Summit can be applied in our communities.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to U.S. Department of State for selecting GEIST as one of the Access providers in Bangladesh and also allowing a team of teacher and administration to join South Asian Access Summit. Our sincere thanks to Curtis Chan, Regional English Language Officer-U.S. Embassy Kathmandu for his encouragement and inspiring words. I would also like to thank Ms. Jennifer Borch, Mr. Ryan Brux, and Ms. Caitlin Downs for their unparalleled support to sharpen our knowledge and empowerment. My heartfelt thanks to Ms. Raihana Sultana, English Language specialist from the U.S. Embassy Dhaka who is the true leader to lead Bangladeshi team and make a great visibility of Access program in Bangladesh. A very special thanks to Bishwa R. Gautam, Kiri Manookin and Kunjaramani Gautam for their tireless support to make the event a huge success.

- **Biplob Kumar Deb**, Director, Access Program of GEIST, U.S. Exchange Alumni (TEA 2014, IVLP 2017)





Access Class is Something Different

I have been a public high school teacher for a long period. Our traditional academic settings are not always satisfactory because of large number of students in classroom. When I got the chance to be an Access Teacher and knew that I had to facilitate underprivileged students in Access classroom, I really overwhelmed with joy. The format (course, program) of Access class attracted me very much.

individually.

Access class has given me the opportunity to reflect and update the conceptions of how, when and where learning does and can take place. As it has a diversified format in which students can learn from and interact with teachers in addition to the level of independence they may have while learning. Students can



Access class means not only the performance and attendance of the students, we also do some enhancement activities and community work. Students sometimes feel bored with only classroom activities. So, when they are engaged with new ideas, new activities and new people, sometimes get chance to learn outside the classroom, they feel very curious and excited. As an Access Teacher, I like these varieties too.

In Access class, there are 20 students in a group and we can use projector along with board-work. So, I feel comfortable because I can show some pictures, videos if any lesson requires it. The class size is small, so, I can monitor the students while doing group work and also it's easy to check their homework

practice four skills of English language here in a wider variety outside their regular classroom settings.

Access program has created and incorporated alternative learning options for underprivileged students and also has involved me in overseeing and designing student performance which is different from my traditional classes. We four Access Teachers work collaboratively and create a friendly environment to provide real-life learning to the students.

I am really fortunate to be an Access Teacher and hugely thankful to US Embassy, Dhaka and GEIST International Foundation.

- **Atia Naz**, Access Teacher, U.S. Exchange Alumni (TEA 2014).



Learning from the Peer teacher



Learning and sharing from the peer group is always fun! I got the opportunity to attend The South Asian Access Summit in late November 2019 in Kathmandu Nepal where about 150 participants including Access teachers, alumni, and officials joined from different countries like Bangladesh, India, Nepal,

each teacher from the participating countries shared their best practices both orally and digital presentation. It was the most beneficial session of the summit for the teachers like me because although we all are running the classes with the same goal and with the same categories of students but the resources,



Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. U.S. Department of State and U.S. Embassy, Kathmandu Nepal gave us the opportunity to meet with Access teachers and learn and share from each other.

As an Access teacher, it was great to meet so many Access teachers, share mutual thoughts and understandings. During the 7 days session we had fun, share our challenges, adaptation strategies, plan for future collaboration to make our Access class more effective for the students.

We, all-access teachers, are happy to serve brilliant students who came from different social, economic backgrounds but they are eager to learn English and want to develop their personal skills such as Technology, Leadership skills as well core skills. I found one thing is very common in all countries which are teachers and students. All Access teachers are ready to provide their best to students. They are happy to teach English, U.S. culture, and values as well as leadership skills and different core skills. I met a few Access alumni there and found some similarities which are- "eager to learn new things". Students have many difficulties but they are ready to overcome. Thanks to the U.S. Department of State to introduce with us such a great program.

South Asian Access Summit 2019 provided a unique opportunity to learn from the peers through the best practice session where

culture, and social values are different. And thus I came to learn many new practices that I haven't practiced earlier but can be implemented in the future. Some of the mentionable practices include – "Group reading and sharing", "various innovative ways of ice-breaking sessions", "Formative and summative assessment techniques", "online resources for language teaching" and also the ways to celebrate Enhancement activities. Moreover, some of the success stories of Access alumni who are now Access teacher and serving the nation as well is mentionable here. The best practices may be different from one country to another but the goal is the same which is to develop the English skills as well as to share U.S. culture with the students.

Finally, I feel more proud to meet Access teachers from different countries and had a great professional network. Our learning and sharing will be continuing and we are looking forward to working together. It is such an honor for me to attend the South Asian Access Summit and represent GEIST International Foundation and it's best practice to the South Asian Teachers. Thanks, U.S. Embassy Dhaka to introduce the Access class in Bangladesh and provide continuous support.

-Mohammad Shahed Ali, Access Teacher, U.S. Exchange Alumni (TEA 2014).



Access : A Tale of Pain, Patience and Success

Teaching is now not a convenient job as many people, nowadays think. Rather, it is the most challenging job, specifically when you work on shaping the life of young guys. Access teaching, I think, is not like usual one but a chance to reshape our thoughts, ideas and relearning our learnings. It's a chance to take challenges to make smile on some pale faces. It's a struggle with struggling students, it's a privilege to support, to guide some unprivileged



youths. To me, Access teaching is a promise to stand beside some adolescence with our information and commitment. In short, this is a service to our community.

The tales I am going to tell now are the tales of our pains, endurance and ultimately success. In another way, we can say, these are the stories of our pain, patience and success. Two/ three years back, Access program was very new to our city. Credit goes to EHDS to bring the chance to the 'Sylheti' people. From the commencement to until date, Access is very close to my heart. I feel, this is a scope for me to lengthen my hands towards nurturing some dreams.

EHDS has started out its ride with forty students from exclusive schools and Madrassahs. Students had been from different kinds of socio-cultural and economic background. It is used to be our first project to put them collectively on an special vision of creating their language skills, leadership competencies and self-assurance and positively impact their communities.



When I look back in to the previously days of Access classes, I can recall those adverse situations we underwent. At the beginning, it seemed that Madrassah and school students got here from two distinctive poles of the world. They, by no means

talked with another, felt shy etc. Especially, female didn't like to take a seat with boys. How difficult it was once to make them easy at some stage in pair or team work! It was a massive undertaking to develop friendship among them. To break the ice, we had to switch from one method to another. Another challenge was managing the guardians. Sometimes, they peeped through the window to make certain whether boys and girls take a seat separately. We had to combat with superstitions, non secular orthodoxy and insensibility. Another vital trouble was their very poor knowledge in English, specially for Madrassah students.

Again, some school authority commenced feeling that Access is trying to pick out their students like coaching centres. But we made them convince, touring them often, attractive them via unique events. In the past days, 'Enhancement Activities' was also bit challenging. When we began introducing some American Culture like Halloween, Thanksgiving etc. they felt like uneasy to cope up with. Sometimes, the neighbours felt inquisitive to see what's going on other side of the wall. On the different hand, we had to struggle a lot whilst taking students for Intensive



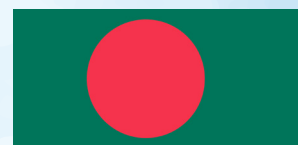
camp. The concept of staying their youngsters outdoor of home besides their dad and mom was beyond their thoughts.

But the scenario started changing as the time advanced. After facing all the challenges, difficulties, it gave us great pleasure when we saw them, speaking with the foreigners. We started out feeling joyful when we noticed that they can prepare power point, can present in front of audience. We began feeling proud seeing our students designing and conducting workshop, madrassah students anchoring cultural programs, dancing with a group. The moments regularly making us elated when we found students were celebrating their birth days and exchanging gifts.

The final surprise was, when I heard one day, someone was telling like, " Access was a life changing route of my life". I thanked God on that moment with tearful eyes! The tear of happiness!

-Pranab K. Deb, Access Teacher and Coordinator, Sylhet, U.S. Exchange Alumni (IVLP 2018)

Access Enhances Cultural Competence



To understand the term “Cultural competence, first we have to understand how the culture of the human community or countries differs from each other’s. There are different cultures around the world. Even in a single country, cultures vary from state to state. Some cultures are similar and others are starkly different from each other. However, the culture of a community can be considered as an island. We only see the surface part of any island, but there is a huge, massive part of it always submerged under the sea. For culture, the submerged part is constituted with its history, traditions, language, religions the community follows, cast and myriads numbers of belief systems. So the characteristics of every single culture are very unique and have a great effect on its people which also controls the whole community.

Cultural competence is the set of abilities that enable people to value their own culture and culture of others as well. Building a relationship is the vital point of cultural competence and it is based on understanding the expectations and attitudes of each other. To understand cultural competence we must know the principle of trust, equity, social justice, respect for diversity, fairness, etc. It enables people to communicate effectively, and interact with people across cultures. Culturally competent one is aware of his culture, respectful and has positive attitudes toward cultural differences, acquire knowledge about different cultures and develop competence to interact across cultures.

Being an Access teacher, I have seen that Access learning

integrates after school instruction, enhancement and intensive session. It emphasizes not only on English language learning but also on technology learning, community service and also get involve in a wide range of activities that helps to identify a student as a critical thinker and become a culturally tolerant. Students are exposed to a good number of enhancement activities on U.S. Culture & values through which they are able

to increase their knowledge about the culture of it and at the same time they came to know the similarities and dissimilarities with them. Moreover I have seen that it helps to remove some wrong beliefs or misconceptions about someone’s culture and give lesson to a student to pay respect to all others’ beliefs and culture. In addition to that

it reminds a student to know how gorgeous his/her own culture is and how it affects their life style and make them unique in this era of globalization.

We have entered the era of globalization. People are connected and communicating virtually for various reasons. So, it is very essential to develop cultural competence to develop a good relationship. Besides, in many countries, such as Canada, Europe, and the USA are culturally diverse where understanding cultural competence is more essential to value cultural differences. Finally I want to conclude that Access is very helpful for a student to be a Culturally Tolerant person.

- Dewan Eshtiak, Access Teacher, U.S. Exchange Alumni (TEA 2014).





Peer Learning in Access

The 'English Access' aims to assist a group of teens to flourish themselves in a way that they will be able to gain opportunities in education, employment, and life. Keeping this in mind, we want to equip them with skills like- communication skills, computer

have some faster learners who take the roles of the explainer, develop their ideas, and help other members of the class. I observe that they listen better to their friends than the teachers. In peer learning the learners feel safe and open without a sense



that someone is evaluating their performance while they are learning. They are more likely to have candid conversations about areas they need to develop with a peer than a teacher. It makes their learning enjoyable.

skills, leadership skills, problem-solving skills, social skill and so on. And in the access classes, we consider peer learning as one of the most used and effective educational practices in which students interact with other students to attain the desired goals. Besides for learning, students first turn to their peers. So, it works as a powerful development tool

In the access program, students participate in many collaborative projects and are always developing themselves with ideas on how to plan and organize a program, work in a team, and make a decision. It helps students master the

difficult skills of giving and accepting honest, constructive opinions from their peers. Also, they are learning to think from the perspective of others. Again, peer teaching gives the learner a deeper understanding as to teach others, he gains a deeper understanding of that subject.

Here the students are of different abilities and from different social and economic backgrounds. So, they have a difference in experiences and ideas. We consider it strength and use their learning for the rest. Very often they do a collaborative project, work in pairs and groups and assist each other with both course contents and personal concerns. Sometimes they do peer teaching and peer assessment. In access classes to attain the language skills, this technique is used in all the three stages of a lesson. In the pre-stage, this technique is used to know the prior knowledge of the students, in the while- stage it is used for a deeper understanding of the content and making enough opportunities to practice and in the post-stage, this gives ideas about their learning.



So, in the access classes, peer learning promotes active learning and paves the way to grow the learners with the help and support of each other.

In English Access classes, peer learning is a good initiative as we have a small class size with a friendly learning atmosphere. So, we always encourage students to come forward and share their thoughts with others. It engages them in a better way, and they feel encouraged to contribute to the class. Already we

- **Shakina Akter**, Access Teacher, U.S. Exchange Alumni, (TEA 2019)

Culture and values in the United States



The United States is a country where the original people were Native Americans who had been living on the continents for tens of thousands of years before the arrival of modern explorers. They had occasional visitors from across the oceans including the visits of Vikings, Chinese, other Asians and more.



In 1492, the Spanish explorer Christopher Columbus rediscovered America and the new waves of immigrants came from all over the world to this new land of abundance and freedom. People settled from the East and West coasts and brought their cultures along. So today, The United States is a melting pot of cultures. From all over the world, people bring in the traditions and beliefs and according to the constitution, everyone is free to pursue their happiness in whatever form they choose.

The dominating influences culturally were of the British, other European, and Latin American countries since most migrants came from there. The Chinese, Indians, and Middle Eastern people are also gaining eminence. People from every country can live in the United States.

Americans like to think big. They are passionate and strong when it comes to protecting their rights and freedom. They prefer to think independently and test their ideas and bring them to work, thus their enterprising nature. Right from school, young children are taught to think and solve their own problems and find their own solutions. In learning and industry, creative solutions are highly rewarded and this gives the nation its cutting edge.

Despite the diversity, there are some common traits that bond the states and their people together. Loosely, there are two kinds of cultural backgrounds. One is the urban-based lifestyle and the other is the vast rural areas where the production happens for not only America but for the rest of the world. The country has a vast natural reserve of minerals and oil as well as huge farms for crop production and animal husbandry.

The American school education system begins at kindergarten and goes up to grade 12. The main languages are English and Spanish with regional accents showing up in different regions.

After graduating from high school, two-thirds of the population attend institutions of higher education for vocational training and higher studies. They may complete a 2-year associate degree or a 4-year bachelor's degree. Some go further to complete their Master's and Ph.D. From the different levels of expertise, they become industrial workers, office staff, and top management. Science and technology have been the cornerstone of development over the centuries.

The city-based life is rather fast-flowing where most people have to attend to hurried lifestyles. Meals and other daily routines have to be set accordingly in-between. Americans generally have their coffee in the morning to get started. Breakfast may be at home or from a takeaway. Lunch is at 12 noon and is mostly done near their workplace. Dinner is taken around 6 pm at home for those who have families and those without families may dine outside for convenience.

In the cities, people are more impersonal, ruled by the clock, and have schedules to follow. They have generally little time to socialize. Due to higher stress levels, there may be more health issues and cases of emotional and abuse and violence. There are gang cultures in some big cities and police and security have to be higher in such environments.

Many people choose to take up professions for something they feel really passionate about. They can become performance and fine artists, sportsmen, and work in nature-related jobs. Many people open their own businesses when they have gained sufficient expertise in their field and employ others to work for them. The catering industry and transport business are two such huge industries. Science and technology are vital in the nation's leading role in the world.

Americans work hard and play hard as well. Their games are very invigorating and active such as American football, Basketball, Baseball being their favourite team sports. The most popular sports watched is Wrestling, motor racing, ice hockey, and soccer in addition to the above. For Leisure, they go to the movies and theaters as well as music. Those who enjoy the outdoors can take hikes on nature trails in the vast forest reserves and open spaces. American also volunteers for different causes and celebrate the outdoors.

The most staple food is wheat, corn, potato, meats, and milk products. They are consumed as baked bread, corn flatbreads, mashed potatoes, cheese, and milk products of sorts. Apple pies and bakery products are always popular in America. Currently,

there has been a divergence for more industrially processed foods that are not as nutritious as the natural foods of the past. In the cities, burgers, hotdogs, and assortment of Latin American, Chinese and other Asian dishes are available as takeaways. In the country, traditional dishes such as bread, pies, and other wholesome foods are the norm. However, many people are now becoming aware of the true nature of processed food and the growth and marketing of organic foods are on the rise.

The nation's farms and industrial products would never have been possible without the efforts of the rural workers and farmers. This is what country life is all about. In the country, people work sunrise to sunset in the fields. The education levels may not be very high but they are more caring as of each other as they are generally large families. They are more bonded as a community and are more appreciative of nature and are generally healthier physically and emotionally. In many regions of the U.S., foreign labour forces are required seasonally to make up for the shortage of people to work on the farms. They come from the Latin American Countries and sometimes from further away. Most of the farms are so large that mechanized farming using automated tractors and harvesters as well as aircraft are used for different farm operations.

It is said: the business of America is Business. Imports and exports make America one of the world's largest economic players on the planet. The owners of big business and big corporations run most industries around the world. The need for an intelligent workforce enables foreign students to go to the US for higher studies and become naturalized citizens. The better-paying jobs have enabled their relatives back in the home

countries to improve their standards of living. Also, the income generated helps them to buy property and luxury goods and boost the economy.

National holidays include Memorial Day commemorating the lives lost in wars. Independence Day, Labour Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. These are times when the families are together and enjoy good meals cooked at home

Americans have the freedom to pursue any religion or not to follow any belief system. When writing the constitution of the United States, the founding fathers have taken the best of all ideologies and religious teachings and put it as a guiding pillar for the whole nation. This has enabled the US constitution to be a model for other countries to become independent.

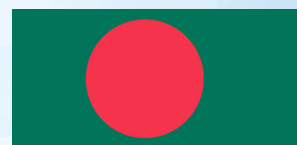
The United States along with other leading countries has spearheaded the advancement of humanity for extraordinary achievements in improving the quality of life, health, space exploration, and the space race for getting men on the moon and beyond.

But as always, when people of different cultures meet, as people of Bangladesh we also have something to learn and contribute to the global community. We have our food, our clothing, our beautiful music, our social values, and the calmness with which we handle life as some of the things that can be valued by Americans.

- **Abdur Raquib**, GEIST Dhaka Team, U.S. Exchange Alumni (IVLP 2019)



Intensive session: An Integral part of Access



When we are born, we have absolutely zero words in our lexicon. A baby utters the first word around the tenth month. A few more months, and the baby utters maybe three or four words. The language learning curve sees a steep increase after that. Like a wildfire, the language catches on, and the baby becomes an expert in the mother tongue. However, this pattern does not repeat itself in the case of second language learning. In Bangladesh, we often see a steep fall in that learning curve and even a halt instead –a conundrum that I pondered over for a long time.

and educational prospects. Participants also gain the ability to compete for and participate in future exchanges and study in the United States. Without self-confidence, though, none of the objectives of the program is achievable.

Intensive Sessions for the Access participants are therefore focused in building that self-confidence so that the participants can confidently communicate, socialize and network with others. The domino effect of this single act in my philosophy will help them expand their vocabulary, give them the ability to



Although a major in English Linguistics helped me analyze language structures, it is only after I became an English teacher for the speakers of other languages and practically worked with learners that I identified one of the major obstacles that is guilty of causing this inconsistency between the acquisition of first and second language –lack of confidence.

The traditional school system and teaching styles, although unintentional, is a slow killer of learners' self-confidence. The learners' natural "trial and error" mechanism for figuring out a new language is choked to death by the time a learner finishes high school. This is carried out by the continuous scrutiny and staring down of the critics around the learners. Like a highly contagious disease, the learners then develop their inner-critics and, in extreme cases, they completely stop speaking the target language, in fear of making an error or being judged by others.

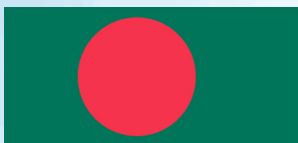
The English Access Microscholarship Program (Access) provides a foundation of English language skills to bright, economically disadvantaged students, primarily between the ages of 13 to 20. Learning English through Access helps them to get better jobs

and speak more accurately and fluently, improve their understanding of grammar, and lastly, improve their written English skills.

Ironically, in my sessions, the participants learn to unlearn to criticize themselves. In other words, my sessions teach them to become "babies" once again. Just like a baby, I teach them to listen actively, to observe, to be respectful to others and take turns appropriately, to be a team player, to collaborate instead of competing, and finally to use eye contact and other non-verbal techniques to be more effective and appealing communicators.

Just like a baby cares less about the errors in language and faces no reprimands from the caregivers, as facilitators of learning, we should be creating a positive and comfortable learning environment for the learners. Only then, the fear of English will slowly dissipate, and the vacuum created by it can instead be filled with fun and joy.

- **Munif Khan**, Access Alumni, Mentor Enhancement Program of GEIST.



Thinking outside the Box

To stand out from the crowd, one's needs to think outside the box. To be successful one has to be extraordinary like we need to be innovative. If we can learn the strategies of creativity to solve the new arising problems around the world, our world could be better and peaceful. We can leave a healthy life. The

learning, under Access, amazed me where a teacher approaching problems in new, innovative ways; conceptualizing problems differently; and understanding students' needs in relation to any particular situation in a way he/she would never think of before.



huge lessons we learn by thinking outside the box. It makes us appreciate diversity. How boring it would be if we all think the same. Different ideologies are important to grow up as a human and accept other's opinions and ideas. There would be no new cultures to explore. No new languages to learn. We can't even realize how blessed with us. We get activated and engaged and realize how much work we need to do in this world. We need to give back to our community. We all have so many opportunities for services to make a difference in the lives of others.

I am an Access Alumni. During my Access days, I have to go through a variety of activities which helped me a lot to grow up to handle any issues in a challenging situation. Access helps us to become a leader who can face a critical moment in the most positive ways. A good number of Enhancement activities helped me to think differently. Access is an eye-opening program for me which allows me to know the culture and values of the U.S. very closely and reshape my thoughts and beliefs. Collaborative work and creative thinking and come of with new ideas to solve common social problems help an Access student to become a person who can change the world in the most sustainable way.

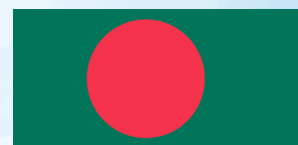
In Access I saw the application of "Thinking Outside the box" in many folds, i.e., in terms of setting program goals, program design, Access books, activities, teaching pedagogy, pedagogical approach and many more. English language teaching and

It's a glad pleasure for me to join Access classes of GEIST in 2019, as a mentor of Enhancement activities, where I have seen the students from different fields are getting global education with all the modern facilities so that they can keep pace with the world. They are very determined about their career and future. Students come together to gain education beyond academic studies. They are very hard workers and eager to learn something new every day. The adaptability and curiosity to study are what they want in their life. Project-based learning, Content-based learning and community program is helping the students to think differently to get a positive change among them as well as among the societies. Access program has widened the thinking of its students without discounting things that seem unconnected which benefits students' thinking level tremendously.

I strongly believe that Service to others is the rent we pay for our room here on earth. The experience through conduction the session is beyond description. We need to heal people's physical and mental challenges to let go of our apathy and enthusiasm and serving and a helping and making a positive impact on humanity. I am thankful to The U.S Department of States and everyone related to it. Thank you for the great initiative.

- Ayesha Ayat, Access Alumni, Mentor of Enhancement Session.

Access is not a simple learning process but...



"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams" – Elanor

English Access Microscholarship Program, which is an initiative of U.S. Department of State for the global underprivileged students, is such a dreaming platform for a student which I have seen very closely as an Access Administrative assistant. What I have seen here is, Access provides a platform to the economically impoverished citizens of the developing countries across the globe to learn ABC in English with Cultural competence. Enhancement activities and Intensive sessions helps an Access student to be tolerant, critical thinker, respect for other culture and beliefs, creative and also become technologically sound.



GEIST International Foundation started its new journey as an Access program provider since October 2018 and from the very beginning of its journey I'm with this journey as an administrative assistant. Being an University student, I have crossed same time period in my life and took part many programs but to me, this is one of the most significant and valuable programs of U.S State Department. At the beginning, the journey was not so smooth, as we had to select students from vocational and technical institutions of Bangladesh, the first of its kind in Bangladesh, and interview them. It was a challenge for me and also my team to find them from such a huge swarm of students studying in various technical and vocational education institutions in Dhaka. After 2 months of hard work, we found 40 fortunate students who were eligible for the scholarship. 50% of them were boys and the rest 50% were girls. A team of GEIST Executives, who are all U.S. Exchange alumni, along with the key mentorship from Ms Raihana Sultana, public affairs section of the U.S. Embassy Dhaka, conducted the interview session where 92 primarily selected students took part. When they first came, they lacked the idea of framing their lives with goals, plans and ideas. But after about one and a half years of journey, every single student have learnt to dream and dare to achieve that dream. Now they are aspiring to become an engineer, or a pilot, or a teacher and many more. The classes of Access program take place every Friday and Saturday. Now every Friday and Saturday is one of the important parts of my life, not only from a professional point of view, but also it has encouraged me to do my duties as an elder brother. I truly miss them if I am unable to see their faces.

Usually we find only lecture based learning module in our general education system. But in Access, the students need to go through a variety of learning cycle, we can call it a Hybrid system, as they have to cover after school instructions, technology classes, enhancement

activities – U.S. culture & values, professional development programs, community service, skype session with the native speakers and many more. So far we have hosted more than five U.S. culture and values events where the U.S. Exchange alumni shared various information on some specific festivals, culture, diversity, food, education system of U.S. from their knowledge point of view and also from their field experience at U.S.

I'm not an U.S. exchange alumni but heard many stories of them who are the emerging social leader and inspiring person for the youth.



Access program under GEIST has given me the opportunities to be in touch with a good number of Access alumni joined as a mentor in different session under Enhancement and Intensive plan. I have talked with many students of our Access program and the presence of those alumni like Mr. Ferdous, Mr. Munif, Ms. Ayesha allow them to think that – "Yes we'll be the part of community change maker".

Through Parents-Teacher's meeting, we came to know the changes of these students in terms of their community service, caring for others and leadership from their parents and teachers of their academic institution. Since this was the first batch from their context, the outcomes of the students were beyond their expectations. These students share their learning under Access with their peers at school, at the community and even with the family members to think the world in the most positive way.

But through out the journey, everyday and every work was not so linear. We had to face few challenges on getting target students, study materials, hosting Access camp and finally the Covid-19 issue. We always encouraged our students to join different competitive events where they can share their thoughts with mass people and also students of similar age and challenges. Our Access students joined 10th National Nature Summit in September where Hon'ble Ambassador of U.S. to Bangladesh joined as the chief guest and our students shared their projects on restoring environment with him and distributed their hand made leaflet to the participants to save our mother nature.

Finally, we believe that one day they will lead this country from the front and reach the zenith of their career. They will be the treasures of our country.

- Saffat Ahmed Bhuiyan, Access Admin, GEIST.



Earth Day 2019: An unforgettable Experience

Out of 365 days in a year, one day can be dedicated as Earth Day- it was totally out of my knowledge before 22nd April 2019, when I joined the Rally and some related activities focusing the day which was organized by GEIST International Foundation funded by U.S. Department of State. The whole program was designed for the Access students. From my learning and also from my findings, let me share few things on Earth day-

activities. Our Access teachers, teaching assistants, Access administrators, journalists, the Guest speaker from the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, Government of the peoples republic of Bangladesh joined the event. The program started with the lecture from our mentors and the speakers. Ms. Dilruba Akhter, Director of the Environment cell of the Department of Environment under the Ministry of Climate Change & Environment



April 22 in each year has been celebrated as Earth day to raise the awareness on saving our Environment since 1970. United States Senator Gaylord Nelson founded Earth day on April 22, 1970 as an Environmental teach-in in U.S.A. This event was first celebrated internationally since 1990 where 141 nations joined this celebration to raise awareness among its people to save our Earth. In each year, Earth day is celebrated globally with a specific theme. "Protect our Species"- was the theme of Earth Day 2019.

This is Sultana Marjahan. I'm a student of English Access Micro scholarship Program in Bangladesh. GEIST International Foundation is running our program and the U.S. State Department is funding the program with the key support from the U.S. Embassy Dhaka. Since my first class under Access, I joined many activities other than After School instructions. Out of the many activities, I want to share with everyone the first experience of Earth Day.

On 22nd April 2019, a group of Access students of GEIST met at the Ramna Park at 8 am as a part of our Enhancement

delivered her inspiring speech to motivate us. We came to know many of the unknown facts of our Earth and also the natural species which touches me. We came to realize the needs for saving our nature and natural resources to keep our existence in this Earth. Finally we joined a rally which covers all around the park, distributed our hand made leaflets to the mass people to include them in our movement of saving Earth and also a waste clean up campaign. A few of my friends joined in art and poster competition. We were very excited to see our photos and news in the facebook page of the U.S. Embassy Dhaka and also in the online news of The Daily Ittefaq and The Daily Sun.

Like me, many of Access students around the world have some unforgettable stories which not only a story but also something more than that. Access introduces us to some new issues which we must have to know but haven't been exposed before Access to many of us.

- Sultana Marjahan, Access Student Bangladesh. [GEIST]



Go Global through Access



“ From the Access teachers,
I came to know about the program goals,
plans of activities and opportunities as an Access students.”



has given me all these supports to learn English, to become technologically sound and also remain safe in social media. We have joined a few skype session with the Fulbright alumni who visited Bangladesh where I have seen the joined effort of technology and English language learning is helpful to make a fruitful communication globally.

During my intensive and enhancement session, I met a few Access alumni who have participated in different Exchange program under the funding support from the U.S. Government and also a few of them get scholarship

My name is MD Saiful Islam. I am 16 years old. Recently I have completed the SSC examination. I am also taking my lessons under the English access micro scholarship program. I started my journey in Access class since January 2019. From the Access teachers, I came to know about the program goals, plans of activities and opportunities as an Access students. I came to know that this program has been running in more than 85 countries and after the graduation in Access I would become one of the Access alumni. I'll be able to join the Access alumni group and will be able to share our thoughts, ideas, challenges and can also participate in many virtual and face to face events. So Access helps a student to become a global citizen.

Control over the English language is the key point for making effective communication with the people who are not Bengali speakers. And also technology is another options to get connected with them. Virtual and social media helps to get an effective connectivity. English Access Microscholarship program

to study in U.S. Thus I think that Access is not a program to learn English and get computer skills but creates the opportunity to a student to become a global citizen.

Here I learned about different cultures, especially American culture, such as, thanks giving day, world earth day, new year celebration, Halloween, the Christmas day. This program not only helping me to gain knowledge but also boosting up my confidence level. I came to know some similarities in celebrating different social events between Bangladesh and U.S. and also some dissimilarities. Knowing culture, language and education system helps me to enrich my knowledge in the global area. I am very much thankful to Access Micro scholarship program.

- Md. Saiful Islam, Access Student Bangladesh. (GEIST)



My Empowerment In Access Program

I'm Khairun Nahar Nabila. Student of Dhaka Polytechnic Institute in 1st year at Computer Science & Technology and also a student of English Access Microscholarship Program 2018-2020. I'm the first person not only in my school but also



from my family to get this golden opportunity to become an Access student. Before joining the access class, I was quiet. I haven't the confidence to communicate in English with others. After joining the access class, I meet wonderful teachers. They act as a coach to empower me in many areas. They encourage me to work collectively, think critically, learn technology and also how to speak in front of others. As a part of this, for the very first time of my life, I have anchored the induction ceremony of the English Access Microscholarship program FY-18 under the provider GEIST and the funding support from the U.S. Department of State. Before that night, I was very nervous and could not sleep because of excitement to play the role of an anchor before the Hon'ble Ambassador of the U.S. to Bangladesh, H.E. Earl R. Miller. From that day I become very confident. I want to give thanks to Shahed Ali sir for his continued support as a mentor.

Visiting American Center Dhaka is another mind blowing event for me where I joined with my Access classmates as a part of our Intensive Session. In the center, I met a few excellent Access alumni. They were Munif Khan, Farzana Anan, and Mohammad Ferdous. They took a session for us. I learned lots of things like- active listening, problem-solving, decision making and the concept of community work. This participation empowered me to think about my community, their problems and how can I do my best for that. As a part of this, I drafted a plan to increase awareness of the Environment and shared it with my Access teachers. On Earth Day 2019 I, along with my Access friends, distributed handmade leaflets to the mass people to aware them of the benefits of nature and natural resources. I also joined a rally on the same day followed by a waste clean up campaign at the Ramna Park, Dhaka, Bangladesh. I continued my activities through participating 10th National Nature Festival at Notre Dame College Dhaka where I was one of the participants of Eco project and wall magazine competition, first of my life.

The whole things look like a dream to me, all of these were quite impossible without Access and thus I remember the common slogan of our Access class- "Access is Success".

Technology is another key part of our Access program. English Language learning through online resources and also technology based Enhancement classes make me technologically sound. Empowerment on Media Literacy and computer skills change my journey to social media and also helpful for school works. I shared my learnings with my classmates at school who are not Access students and trying to teach them "Safe use of the internet- as a female user".

Throughout our Access Program, we hosted several programs at GEIST Center as a part of our Enhancement activities like Thanks Giving Day, Halloween, Celebrating New Year, U.S. Culture, etc. For this celebration, we decorated the GEIST Center by handcrafts, play cards, flowers, and colorful balloons and I also learn how do teamwork. On those days, I met lots of U.S. Exchange alumni and also the parents of the Access classmates. Access classes not only teach English but also teach leadership skills, make the right decisions, team work, community work, and make higher dreams inside of a student.

Meeting native speakers both virtually (at the American Center Skype session) and face to face helped us to get confident in communication. I came to meet many American officials because of Access who are Ms. Isabelle Zsoldos, Ms. Elizabeth Thornhill, Curtis Chan (RELO Officer), Black Philips, Adam Lukas Julian, Rebeka Hansen Yoon and of course the honorable U.S ambassador Earl R Millar.

Finally, I can say that Access gave me an U-turn in my life. Now I am dreaming big about myself, my family, my country and also for the betterment of the whole world. I'm planning to join Exchange programs for further study in the U.S. or will try for getting a scholarship to study in the U.S.A. After getting my proper education, I'll return my country and serve the people here and try to do some positive changes in my community where I faced many challenges in my life. I don't want to see those challenges for the next generation. My sincere gratitude to the U.S. State Department for thinking and designing such a program for the people like us. Long live Access and Access means Empowerment.

-Khairun Nahar Nabila, Access Student Bangladesh. (GEIST)

Learning English in a different mode



I am Surma Akter. I am a student of the English Access Micro Scholarship program. In addition to that I am also a student of Noyatola Anjuman Mofidul Islam vocational Institute. In my academic study, I got the opportunity to learn English from our English teacher at the vocational institute. But the lecture method of teaching fails to attract me and thus my performance was very poor. Moreover to do well in the academic part, I need to follow some study materials which was also in English. Thus English was the big challenge for me.



Now I have overcome the challenge of dealing English. I can write, read and communicate in English better than the past. All of this miracle because of Access. I think that I am lucky enough to get selected in the Access program. Just after one year of my Access journey, I'm finding myself in a different position. My Access class performance is gradually increasing and at the same time my academic achievements are also moving forward. Actually the main issue that come to my mind is that the approach of teaching, study materials used and also different scopes offered to the Access students help a student to get inspiration of learning English in a friendly environment. And thus the pace of learning outcome is very high in compared to the formal teaching and materials

used for teaching and learning English in our local institution.

"Our world American English Book" for the students of level 5 & 6 were used as a study material with few other books like "Our world work book" & "Tale of Thunder & lightning". My vocabulary knowledge improves by reading those books, online vocabulary resources, especially American English website & Voice of America website. Writing book review, creative assignment, report writing helps my writing skills to develop with critical thinking level. Delivering power point presentation, group discussion, sharing ideas with the class teachers and also skype and face to face session with the native speaker allows me to improve my skills in Speaking. Online listening tools, watching videos in the voice of America website used for listening module helped me to get positive outcome in listening.

English is an international language. We must have to know it for international communications. The English Access Micro scholarship program is a platform where I learn English easily and effectively. Friendly approaches from the teachers and also the flexibility of learning options with effective study materials are the key issues for me to get success in English Language learning. The

duration of the program is 2 years. One year already passed and now we are in the middle of the program. I think the rest part of the program will take me in such a level that will help me to get success in my further study and even in job sector. Finally I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to Access program and the U.S. State department for selecting me and giving me this wonderful platform.

- Surma Akter, Access Student Bangladesh. (GEIST)



My Access My Community

I am Rumi Akter Mim. Currently I am a student of Kabi Nazrul Government College and also a Student of English Access Microscholarship Program funded by U.S Department of state and implemented by GEIST International Foundation. I have been in this journey since January 2019, when I started my first after School instruction classes with some amazing and inspiring Access teachers. Since then in each and every classes I'm developing myself in a way who can meet the critical challenges of 21st century.

Access program provides me the opportunities to learn English, develop my technology skills, collaborative skills through group work & project-based learning. I liked the concept of keeping some Enhancement and Intensive session in Access program. In our regular school instruction, we are familiar with the face to face teaching methods. But Enhancement and intensive sessions give us a different flavor that was helpful to make a student, like me, confident, creative and pay respect to others culture and values.

Community work or community service-this concept under the Access program attracts me a lot. I have come from a underprivileged community where I have seen many challenges that my community members are facing day by day which is affecting their health, environment and sustainable growth. Through Access I came to learn many things which I think may be helpful for my community. I always try to share few of my learning with my friends and family members to empower them. I used to share my regular English learning tools with my classmate and also with my brother and sister.

One of the best day of my life is 22nd April 2019, the Earth Day 2019. I have visited the Ramna Park, one of the famous and natural park located at the center of our capital Dhaka, many times but my presence on that day was totally different. I joined a rally focusing the theme of the day, made 30 hand made leaflets on saving our earth for the distribution to the mass people and finally joined a cleaning session where we collected

more than 20 kg of waste materials and put them into the main dust bin. This activities shaken my mind and I have talked with some of my friends in my community to stop pollution there. I shared my experience with my classmates at college and also with the class teacher. They praised the plan and agreed with me to work together to continue this type of work.



Our second community awareness activities under Access was " Restoration of our own Heritage". On November 15, 2019 our Access team visited " Lalbagh Fort", one of the oldest heritage site in Bangladesh which was constructed in 1678, a 342 years old structure reflecting the culture, architecture and many more of the ancient times. During the visit we were informed about the concept of Heritage, its importance and also the role of us to restore it by our mentor, Mr. Dewan Eshtiaq and other teachers in the team. We have seen that many parts of this valuable heritage site are not in actual shape because of unconscious movement or activities of the people during the visit. We talked with the visitors and shared our views of importance

of Heritage restoration.

So far the Access journey is very interesting and impactful to me. Many of my friends have been empowered in many issues. As I mentioned earlier that My Access journey will be ever remembered to me because of its community works, which touches my heart. I feel the need of such work more and more for my community, my country but such activities are not common here. One day when I'll grow up and move to the next level of my study, I'll continue my further studies on some social community solution programs and work for the community to see my community people safe and sound. So I can say- Access teaches us to learn for community.

- Rumi Akter Mim, Access Student Bangladesh. [GEIST]

Now I'm Confident Enough



Believing in yourself or feeling comfortable in your true self is called Confidence. Confident is one of the required qualities among the youth to get success. It helps you to connect with others and keeps moving in doing positive works. And I believe that if I'm confident enough, people will believe on me. But this Confidence is absent in most of the students of my class where I'm studying now.

This is Md. Asik Chakladar, a student of Technical & Vocational background. I have one more identity, I am proud to introduce myself as an Access student. I have completed one year lesson/ journey with Access. Although it is only a year, but the lesson

to life and the future. Start planning and get your Confidence!

Access gave me to get my Confidence in English. Like most of the friends of my class in Access I was introvert. I got nervous whenever I was asked to say something before my classmates. But the design and activities of my Access class is done in such a way that I get surprised when I find myself that I can now talk to people without fear, I can communicate in English fluently, I can express my opinion confidently. I can draft my ideas in English and present my group. I realized that English is just a medium of communication, a language, it is not a measure of my knowledge. This is why I am learning and practicing English



learned here is difficult to learn for me if I am not an Access student. My friends and class teachers at school finds my improvement in English language skills, public speaking, working together, leadership and time management. I also agree with them and found myself in the upgraded stage.

Access classes are helping me to explore myself in a new way and make me more confident. Some of the issues I wanted to share which I think might help others to improve their confidence level. What makes me to become confident? A few changes in my approaches of regular activities under Access and guidance from the Access teachers and teaching assistants has taken me to this position. I would like to encourage you to join me with the followings- Be a kind person, Have a positive mind/ vision, Go outside of your comfort zone, learn to like, love and respect yourself, accept responsibility, respect your own views, encourage people around you & respect their views, look forward

more and more to better communicate in different situations.

Not only my English language learning level is improved because of Access but also I'm confident in dealing basic technology to learn English, doing common work using computer, surfing in the social media and guide my friends to make a plan for community service. From my Access experience, I can now design an awareness campaign on any social issue and write the steps for its implementation.

Finally I can conclude with the remark that Access helps to bring Confidence among the students because of its diversity in activities.

- **Md. Asik Chakladar**, Access Student Bangladesh. (GEIST)



Technology in the Classroom

I'm Ruhan Inteher Monmoy. I started my Access journey as a student in 2019 and still my journey is continuing under GEIST International Foundation with the funding support from the U.S. Department of State. When I joined as an Access student, I had a very little idea about the program. I thought that it would be more focused on English Language learning which I need badly to get a good job and also for the next level of education. English language teaching and learning here in Access are completely different from my past and present educational institution. Here we are learning English through a variety of teaching methods, a Hybrid approach- as per our teachers' saying. We learn English from our teachers through face to face instructions, online language learning games, American English website and also from the native speakers.



Technology is important for us because without technology we cannot know the happening of our society and it is useful of the student and teacher. We can create of our own strategies to use technology. Learning technologies are also interesting because now a days we are embedded with Technology in many issues. Technology in the Access classroom makes our teaching and learning more meaningful and fun. Students are also able to collaborate with their own classmates through technological applications.

Through Enhancement activities, we were given training on the computer skills, Media literacy and many more. Besides this, virtual session at the American Center with the previous Fulbright

alumni who visited Bangladesh before helps me to think about the application of technology in learning. We are increasing our writing skills through Blogging, e-mail communication, creating assignment ; reading skills through visiting American English website, Voice of America website and many English language learning webpages; listening skills through video tutorials and voice of America web page activities.

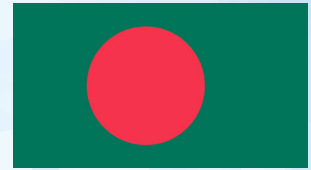
Access class allows me to present our group work through writing and power point presentation. Before this program, I have never used Power Point Presentation and I was very shy to speak on before my classmates. But this Access class gave me that confident. Now I can design and present any topic through power point presentation, give feedback on it and help my classmates at school to develop their knowledge on it.

My overall experience with Access is great. Because of my last 1 year, I got many achievements such as confidence in speaking English, upgraded listening skill and reading skill. This class has developed my leadership skill, team work skill, communication skill and etc. So, I want to tell this class is important for our students. I am thankful to Almighty Allah to get chance to join this program. My learnings here will be beneficial for me to get a good job to bring a smile to my family. Thanks American Center Dhaka for implementing Access in Bangladesh for us.

- Ruhan Inteher Monmoy, Access Student Bangladesh. (GEIST)

“English language teaching and learning here in Access is completely different from my past and present educational institution.”

Media Literacy in Access



Media literacy is generally the ability to access the media. It helps to understand the different aspects of the media and media contents. And also, to create communications in a variety of contexts. It allows us to understand the messages they (the media) are sending. Media literacy is an essential skill in this modern age. It is helping students to be informed and critical understanding of the nature of mass media. The techniques used by them and the impact of these techniques. More specifically it is understanding and enjoyment of how the media work. How they produce meaning, how they are organized, and how they construct reality. Media literacy also aims to provide students with the ability to create media products. It's the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms.

What I shared above is the few insights on Media Literacy. This is based on my Access learning and also from my study on this

I shared my learning with my family members and guide them to track the news source, its authenticity before going to any action or reaction. In addition to that, we also learned about the proper planning on it for a successful media campaign. Time, Content, Photo, Target Audience and Text are the important components for social media. Like me, all my Access classmates have a good command of it now. I have talked with my teacher in the school that I want to share my learning on Media Literacy with my peers to make them aware of fake news and keep them away from facing an unusual situations. Hope that I'll be able to run a sharing session with them soon.

English Language skills and technological skills- both are important in social media issues. And Access gave me to get a sound knowledge on it. My communication skills of English are better than that of my entry in Access. Teaching through



issue from different online sources. My name is Sheikh Fatima Papiya. I'm a current Access student and studying at Grade 11 under the Science field. GEIST International Foundation under the funding support from the U.S. Department of State is running our Access program in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Although I and many of my friends are using Facebook for the last couple of years but the term "Media Literacy" first came to my learning under the English Access Program. Here we came to know about Media literacy, its importance and various challenges in social media. And we also came to know about the safe internet use, as a female user. Our teachers shared details on it and also showed us "Public Service Announcement" under Media literacy that they have learned during their Service-Learning Hackathon in the South Asian Access Summit in Nepal 2019. We came to learn that social media can be used in many constructive purposes like awareness campaigns, social service-learning projects, arranging a walk on a social issue etc.

different instructions helps me to educate different pathways of learning English, relate issues to real-life contexts, become a critical thinker to solve a community problem and ultimately to become a public speaker.

We're going to be graduated soon. In Bangladesh, many girls are facing unexpected threats on social media, even many of our Access friends. I want to keep continuing my learning and sharing it in my next level of study. And in the future, I want to make our girls skilled enough to handle social media related issues strongly.

- **Sheikh Fatima Papiya**, Access Teacher Bangladesh. (GEIST)



Access Enhances Cultural competence

To understand the term "Cultural competence, first we have to understand how the culture of the human community or countries differs from each other's. There are different cultures around the world. Even in a single country, cultures vary from state to state. Some cultures are similar and others are starkly different from each other. However, the culture of a community can be considered as an island. We only see the surface part of any island, but there is a huge, massive part of it always submerged under the sea. For culture, the submerged part is constituted with its history, traditions, language, religions the community follows, cast and myriads numbers of belief systems. So the characteristics of every single culture are very unique and have a great effect on its people which also controls the whole community.

Cultural competence is the set of abilities that enable people to value their own culture and culture of others as well. Building a relationship is the vital point of cultural competence and it is based on understanding the expectations and attitudes of each other. To understand cultural competence we must know the principle of trust, equity, social justice, respect for diversity, fairness, etc. It enables people to communicate effectively, and interact with people across cultures. Culturally competent one is aware of his culture, respectful and has positive attitudes toward cultural differences, acquire knowledge about different cultures and develop competence to interact across cultures.

Being an Access teacher, I have seen that Access learning integrates after school instruction, enhancement and intensive session. It emphasizes not only on English language learning but also on technology learning, community service and also get involve in a wide range of activities that helps to identify a student as a critical thinker and become a culturally tolerant. Students are exposed to a good number of enhancement activities on U.S. Culture & values through which they are able to increase their knowledge about the culture of it and at the same time they came to know the similarities and dissimilarities with them. Moreover I have seen that it helps to remove some wrong beliefs or misconceptions about someone's culture and give lesson to a student to pay respect to all others' beliefs and culture. In addition to that it reminds a student to know how gorgeous his/her own culture is and how it affects their life style and makes them unique in this era of globalization.

We have entered the era of globalization. People are connected and communicating virtually for various reasons. So, it is very essential to develop cultural competence to develop a good relationship. Besides, in many countries, such as Canada, Europe, and the USA are culturally diverse where understanding cultural competence is more essential to value cultural differences. Finally I want to conclude that Access is very helpful for a student to be a Culturally Tolerant person.

- An Access Teacher from Columbia



MY ACCESS STORY



I am Daniela Rodriguez, one of the Alumnus of English Access Microscholarship program in Colombia (Soacha) 2016 – 2017. On that time I learnt a lot, about a new culture without travel

to the original country, the program Access was talking about something who no one else could say you and is dream big, be a leader, be someone important in the world try to do the better for you and you can help to others to be better, well, those words gave the key to open up my mind and start dream big.

I've never thought to learn another language, something that I saw so impossible in my whole life in that moment, our Access teachers were amazing people, they always taught us how the dreams can come true, in each class we talked about trips, countries, experiences, how to get a great job through a new language and pay your University, imaging that, pay your own studies talking in English, we celebrated a lot of holidays from U.S, we did presentations about magic places in the world,



how you pass an interview in English, how to be creative, making a lot of activities to improve our skills, even we sing and we did a great presentation in our grade. We went to a funny camp, we made a campfire and sing around it, we were talking and talking in English all the time we recreate a play we learnt about values how to work as a team.



The final activity or task we had to talk with foreign people in a tourist place and make a video interview, Wow! That was my favorite activity because at the moment I was talking

with them I've don't though I was understanding each word they are saying, and I started to make questions about my country, like 'what do you thing about Colombian's food ? ' or something like that, and they answered me with words like: -Colombia is a wonderful place, Colombia has the best people, the food is like to taste the paradise, something that is weird to hear this from other people, but anyway, I learnt something new, people can learn Colombia are more than those bad things we listen in the news, and if we build a great education, we can build dreams.

- Daniela Rodriguez





Access, the beginning of a journey.

To believe in what we did not see is faith, to believe in what we see is reason and science, but to believe in what we will see is hope (Unamuno, 1938) and with hope is that we joined the Access program. It is well known to teachers around the globe that teaching high school students can represent a real challenge, specially if they are from a public school in a poor part of the city as they are more vulnerable to different situations. However, hoping that our work would benefit the students who were selected to be a part of the program is that we started working for this program.

Even though it was an English course, we had different projects that aimed to empower students as individuals and as a part of society. Therefore, the projects developed not only raised awareness about the ways to solve problems but also helped them to identify themselves with their community. Students had to observe the issues that happened around them so they could come up with ideas to help. However, sometimes we as humans need a little help to see the things that are in front of us. The group of teachers led by the coordinator decided to help students see their community differently by creating the very first project about photography. Students used pinhole cameras to take only one picture around their communities and later they revealed and explain the photos they took. Little by little, we helped them to see possible ways to help their communities by raising awareness, taking care of themselves, volunteering, setting up art exhibits, and recycling. Every project gave them

the tools and guidance necessary to see how small changes could cause an impact on their immediate environment.

The students were very committed to complete their homework, assignments, projects, rehearsals, and they never belittled what they got with Access. They had a sense of belonging as if they were members of a family. As teachers, we encouraged them and gave them pieces of advice about the potential benefits they could obtain by learning a foreign language. The teaching and learning experience from Access is something that makes us feel proud not only for seeing low-income communities that do not have resources to make ends meet and still give the extra mile to overcome their situations, but seeing that some students currently have jobs they got because of their English. Access showed them that if you take every chance and are willing to learn, no one can stop you.

Although we moved from Colombia after the program ended, we keep in touch with the students that are thirsty for knowledge. They still want to learn, to experience, to try, to hear and to share their experiences with the language and their communities. The program may have ended but the Centro Colombo Americano and the Embassy of the United States in Bogota still promote homecoming activities so that students can keep in touch and we can keep showing them opportunities.

- Juan Acevedo & Rocio Cano



Moving forward for my goals



My name is Valentina Lopez. I'm a student in the English Access Microscholarship Program. I am also a student at Anibal Fernandez de Soto School, my educational institution, since its emphasis on bilingualism has a good level of teaching in English but still has some shortcomings and the teaching is superficial. Although I had a good performance in English at school and also on my own initiative I studied for other technological tools, I lacked more experience, knowledge and tools to improve my learning

I feel very grateful and fortunate to be part of the ACCESS scholarship program because it has been an opportunity that has allowed me to advance, develop and improve my English skills, it has also allowed me to deepen and further strengthen the development of my leadership and entrepreneurship thanks to the additional programs I have had very significant progress that have made me more confident in several aspects of my life, thanks to the comprehensive tools, teaching methodology, in addition to the commitment and dedication of each of the teachers to strengthen our knowledge and make learning more dynamic, enjoyable and fun. Additionally, incentives have enabled us to live and enjoy unique experiences and meet people who have encouraged me to continue advancing in my dreams.

For our process we are using a fantastic tool that is our book "Touchstone" and "EVOLVE" (currently we have worked on this)

in which my reading and writing skills have had an excellent change and progress. Also with all the dynamic activities that are done with the help of power point presentations in class and projection of documentaries and movies, and other activities with audiovisual programs in the creation of videos. We also have a web page where we reinforce our knowledge in a didactic way. We have also carried out additional projects, one of which has been a project to help improve our neighborhood through recycling. Furthermore, we have had the opportunity to meet important people where we have interacted directly through English, and they have trained us.

I have already experienced a year of this fabulous program that allowed me to open my mind and see more towards the horizon with a more critical and complete mentality. Mastering English allows me to achieve goals that are linked to my life project, it is also essential since this is an international language, it allows us to open doors and obtain better opportunities throughout our lives in terms of work, personal and educational aspects. I feel privileged to live this magnificent opportunity which I am taking full advantage of and enjoying this stage. In closing, I want to thank the Access and the United States state and the department for participating and creating this valuable program.

- Valentina Lopez

My Access story

My name is Sergio Daniel Cicuamia Guerrero, I am from Colombia, and I must admit that before Access I used to hate the English language. Now that I have your attention, I will tell you how English Access Microscholarship program changed my mind about learning English.

When I was in 8 grade a teacher from my school told me about the Access Microscholarship program, the entrance examination was the same day she told me, so after school I went to de Colombo to present the exam, and I didn't pass it. But two months later the teachers from the Colombo called me and told me that I had a place in the Access family due to the fact that some students had deserted. It was an opportunity that I could not deny. We were 75 students and we were divided into three groups of 25 students.

In Access program we learned about leadership, team working, performance and about American culture, I really liked the story of Martin Luther King and his famous phrase "I have a dream". Access classes never were boring or monotonous like the ones

that I received at the school, the learning strategy and the activities were very fun and made easy to understand the English language. Learning English were very natural because we never spoke Spanish during the classes, we felt the necessity to speak English to communicate and in that way our brains were thinking in English instead of Spanish, so much so that when I spoke in Spanish I thought about how would I say that in English.

The access experience helped me in my life to be more confident about myself when I speak in public and now I can understand information that is not available in Spanish, that's pretty cool because sometimes find solutions to things I thought were impossible to fix

I will never forget the Access camp and all the friends and experiences that have a place in my mind and hearth, I am proud to have been a student of the English Access Scholarship Program in 2017-2018. I think you will never forget the knowledge you get when you have fun.

- Sergio Daniel Cicuamia Guerrero



Learning English in a different mode

I am Daniela Alejandra Cortes Laiton, I am 16, I am a student of the English Access Micro Scholarship program. In addition to this, I am also a student of Nicolas Buenaventura school.

In my academic study, I do not have enough English classes during the week, neither a good material to learn properly; therefore, my English level had been very poor. This is why English has become a great challenge for me.

Now I am having overcome the challenge of improving communicative skills like writing, reading, speaking, and listening in a foreign language better than in the past. All of this because of Access.

I think that I was lucky enough to get selected in the Access program, during the time I have been studying in Access, I have carried out various activities inside and outside the institute that have motivated me to learn this language more every day.

Nowadays I am finding myself in a different position. My Access class performance is gradually increasing and at the same time, my academic achievements are also moving forward. My progress is due to the approach of teaching, study materials used, and also different scopes offered to the Access students that help us to get inspiration for learning English in a friendly environment. All the activities where I have been, like talks with

the American astronaut, Jeanette Epps, and some volunteer teachers from the United States who shared their experiences with us, these face to face session with the native speaker allows me to improve my skills in speaking, also the camping was a great experience to the students of the first levels, besides we participate in a fair where we presented a project that we had been carrying out some months ago.

The website "Cambridge one" using to this moment has been a great tool for learning online and improve the development of the skills as writing, reading, speaking, and listening. The English Access program has friendly approaches from the teachers and also the flexibility of learning options with effective study materials; these are the key issues for me to get success in English Language learning.

The duration of the program is 2 years. One year already passed and now we are in the middle of the program. I think when the program finished it will take me to a better level that will help me to get success in my further studies. Finally, I would like to thank to Access program and the U.S. State Department to give me this opportunity which has been a wonderful experience.

- Daniela Alejandra

English, culture and knowledge in a new way

I'm Juan Diego Gomez Yopasa. I am a student of the English Access Micro Scholarship program, one of the scholarships for students offered by the U.S. Embassy. I belong to the Muysca indigenous community in Suba. As a young indigenous person, I was given the opportunity to learn Muyscubun, the native language of my community, and also sometimes to learn a little English, however I never had a full time or an accurate and rigorous methodology to learn the language in all senses.

As I entered the program and slowly took the practice of the methodology, I realized how my English was improving, and also how my soft skills and cultural knowledge of the North American country was being fed more and more. With one year of being in the program, I could write, listen, speak and read better than before, the topics I saw in school, the grammar and other topics, were gradually understood more. ACCES is a friendly learning environment, to be in confidence and to learn in a strict but "relaxed" way. Also, the teaching about the culture and about the North American context made me know more about the history of America and about all the cultural and historical richness that the wonderful American continent has, without forgetting the

two main nations in this alliance. All this thanks to the English Access Micro Scholarship program, in fact, without them I would not have known that I have the knowledge in all its meaning.

The lesson that has most marketed my life in ACCES is how globalization in various forms gives us to understand that alliances and communities can help in all its sense to the own and general advance; how the alliances of different cultures can break fortresses and make a joint work to bring great minds to today's society.

ACCES is a very easy and effective way to learn English, in my experience after spending 2 semesters of 4 that the program lasts, I am supremely grateful to the United States government, to my Muysca community, and to El Colombo Americano for giving me the possibility to learn the international language. I owe my success in building my identity as a Colombian, as a native, as a student, and as a musician, in part to this wonderful and formative experience.

- Juan Diego Gomez Yopasa

The commute was long.



The commute was long, not because the school was too far from the place I usually teach at, but because traffic is always chaotic in this city. The day was cloudy and chilly, almost frosty. Not a good omen. It looked like rain, but it didn't. There were a handful of parents waiting for their children at the main gate of the school, and I was there too waiting for them to open the doors. Boy did they open their doors!

The selection process was relatively easy. There were about 5 different groups of students between 13 and 16 years old. The teachers looked into some numbers and chose the 4 highest ranked kids in each group to make an All Star group to take lessons in the ACCESS program. I was there just to deliver those lessons.

I was not one of them. I was an alien, and thus I was scrutinized. How old I was; where I was from; who my family was; what I expected from them and several other questions were presented to see who they were dealing with. However, the Riddle of the Sphinx was this one: How would you deal with homosexual students?

Many years before, I had one very special math session. My teacher told us about his childhood in a town north of the country. He said that despite not having much his family were happy, and his parents managed to bring him up along with his 5 siblings. He said it had been quite difficult for him to come to this city, but he needed to do it in order to have a career. I remember wondering why all math lessons couldn't be like that one. Why couldn't all math lessons be such that I can actually remember something without having to do millions of exercises and boring calculations?

Many years later, probably during the first week of ACCESS, I learned why those lessons couldn't all have been storytelling sessions: I needed to learn some actual math. But, what if there was a happy medium? I guess there is a way to keep your students engaged while they learn some math. Fortunately, I didn't have to figure that out for a math class, but for an English one.

That day we had to work on the Present Perfect. Never Have I ever tweaked a drinking game into a classroom game, but I had nothing to lose.

-Never Have I ever cheated on an exam

-Are you serious teacher? Nah, I can't believe it!

-Trust me. I've always been kind of a chicken when it comes to cheating. I hate the idea of being caught

-Not even once? At least when you were very little.

-Well, actually there was this one time....

I survived that one class. And I had a couple of realizations. On the one hand, I'm braver than I thought I was. I was really scared of the idea of teaching a group of teenagers in a public school. Teaching adults was my thing. It was all I had done so far. On the other hand, I realized I was not an alien anymore. I could see my younger self in the inquisitive looks of the kids who couldn't believe I had never cheated on a school test in my life. That day was cloudy and chilly. Refreshing.

A few of months into the course we went to see a play. It was Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. Some students were excited, some other were apprehensive since it was the first time we would leave the grounds of the school, and we would interact with other people in English. The play was interesting; the costumes and make up were splendid; the actors were magnificent, and the whole experience was remarkable. But that was not the most important thing we experienced that day. That day we realized we were not the best 4 students of each class in ninth grade put together with other people in the same school. We were ACCESS. We had become a group in its own right. We had connected and were one. That day we learned what ACCESS is all about.

ACCESS is not only about teaching English. ACCESS is mainly about connecting cultures and people, even within your own neighborhood. Describing what we do on an everyday basis means very little if we don't understand that in the end we aim to provide our students with opportunities for them to explore their own world and their own beings. ACCESS is about opening doors, like the door they opened for me that first day of class. And when you open the doors to your family, whether they are tall or short, young or old, gay or straight is irrelevant.

The commute was long, not because the school was too far from the place I usually teach at, but because traffic is always chaotic in this city. The commute was long, but worth every second because I got to meet my family. ACCESS IS FAMILY.

- Mauricio Acosta Rodríguez



My Best Version For The Future

Hello I am Brandon. I am 18 years old. I am from Quetzaltenango and I was an Access student from 2018 to 2019.

When I started the program, I was very different. I used to be very reserved and shy. I did not like to socialize much. It was very difficult for me to do it, but I was funny with the people close to me. Before I felt really scared when I spoke with many people. I had developed this personality because of some family problems.

Now, two years later, I am sociable and funny with people around me. I have many skills to speak with the people and I have another perspective on life. My most memorable experience was when I was in charge of a presentation in my class because I felt a mix of emotions. However, I learned that everyone can be a good leader.



My challenge in Access was to speak in public because I felt uncomfortable and scared in front of all people, but now with the experience that the program gave me, I can speak in public. Access has inspired me to be more creative in many ways. I have also improved my relationships with people around me and my skills to interact with people.

Finally, Access is the only program that makes a difference in society by motivating, inspiring and teaching to teenagers in many ways. I am grateful to be part of this family that has taught me many things for my life.

Notes from his teacher:

When I recall Brandon from first year, he was just a shy student who did not want to participate at all. He avoided eye contact at all cost and did not want to have any role that pushed him to speak in the classroom. I remember the first days of classes, he used to ask his classmates to share his questions with me, because he was afraid to speak or share his thoughts. However, he was one of the few students that was always strived to help others. He usually asked his classmates if they needed something, or if he could be of any help. He was the only one

to wave good-bye, while his classmates always hugged us (teachers) to say good-bye.

Since the moment he started the program, we knew that he was carbon that needed to be under pressure in order to become a diamond. People would say that the changes he had were easy, but it took him some time to become what he is now. He went from being extremely shy to become the president of the class.

His mother always told us, that even at home he was smiling more, and helping more due to what he was experiencing in the program.

To his classmates, he became the source of trust and support, he always invested time to create surprise birthday parties to all of his classmates, he looked for the well-being of everyone in the class, he expressed his ideas more

often, he protected his classmates by looking for ways to solve the conflicts they might have. He is the representation of what the Access program does for the students. I would say that Brandon, to me, could be represented as a Phoenix because he worked hard in every activity he did.

He excelled in his own studies and was popular both with students and teachers, his goal was simply to be of service to everyone. It proved to be an equally rewarding learning experience both for the classmates he helped and for his own personal growth. He led many parents' meetings and today, he's studying to become a successful teacher in order to inspire his students to bring out the best in others as well as themselves. And I am sure, he will surely do, and he will surely guide other Brandons out there to experience the best of themselves.

Brandon was selected to be part of the SEAL Teaching Program in 2020. Now he is acquiring skills to become a teacher. He shows a great vocation to teach and very detailed observation skills. He is on a new process of discovery as he learned some of his abilities on the Access program, but surely this program will continue pushing him to find his greater version.

- Brandon

My Access Story



My name is Luis Jose David Hernandez Ajanel. I'm sixteen years old, and I'm from Quetzaltenango Guatemala. When I started in the Access Program I was a very shy person also without any abilities to talk with people. It really scared me to talk to others! Now I can see a big change in many aspects of my personality. Especially with my abilities at the moment of talking in front of people. I also feel like a person that can do everything.

I don't actually have a specific moment that was very special to me because in every class you can have a memorable moment with your classmates. One of my favorite experiences was helping in the Teacher Training Sessions (TTS) in the first year of Access. There, I learned that when working as a team you can make amazing things.

Access has inspired me to become more disciplined and to take advantage of everything. If you have free time you can do a lot of things with that time. It has helped me to appreciate the opportunities that I have. I am thankful for being part of Access.

Access made a difference in my life because it helped me discover what I want to be or at least have an idea about it. Access is a place where you are going to learn but not only English you will learn about values, and teamwork. Also, you will grow as person.

My final words for Access is that I don't know what would have happened to me if I hadn't had this opportunity. I only can say that I am very grateful.

Notes from his teachers:

Since the first time I saw David, I noticed that he was very

nervous around people. Speaking to someone he did not know or trust, troubled him to the point that he started sweating or trembling. When he was my student, he was the one that did not participate at all, not even with his classmates. He was most of the time very quiet and observant.

However, when his classmates motivated him to speak, his ideas were amazing! Little by little he started gaining confidence and trusting his classmates. Thus, it motivated him to speak and share more in the class. He started smiling more often and even started bothering (me) the teacher with jokes about the class.

A year later David became my student, and he was still a little shy at least with me; as I was a new person to him. He was better at conversating with his classmates of the previous year, but he was struggling a lot when interacting with new people. I remember very well that he used to sweat a lot when talking in front of others and he had a twitch on his eye. He seemed to be ashamed of smiling as well. Every time he smiled, he used to hide or become serious right when someone noticed him smiling.

Now he is more confident about himself and I am very proud of the big changes he has demonstrated in a year. He smiles a lot more naturally and he participates without other motivating him. Something that helped him a lot was becoming timekeeper in the class; he had the responsibility of taking time and call everyone's attention when time was up. He was very quiet, but the role required him to raise his voice and find ways to keep everyone's attention in class

- Luis Jose David Hernandez Ajanel.





My Experience in Access

I was near to my 16 years when suddenly a great opportunity came to me, that was the BEAR Program*. I thought it was going to be like those ordinary English classes, but that was not true, since my first day I saw people that were different, responsible, optimist and strong people. I remember I had to run every day, sometimes I could not have lunch, but that was not important when I thought about seeing my class.

I gave my effort in those classes, and not for being better than my classmates. I gave the best of me because my classmates were giving their effort too. When the official selection process started I worked very hard. I think I did a good job in my interview because two weeks later, a teacher called me. I shall always remember that day, and the words, "you were accepted". It was one of the happiest moments in my life. I was very nervous, during my first day, but soon I saw the wonders that first year (now second year) students told me were true, or even more!

That day I realized I now have no friends or teachers; I have a family. Access is a place where I can be myself, a place where I want to be, a place of capable people, a place where I can grow.

Access helped me to improve my life in different ways. The teachers showed me that teamwork is possible. They taught me there are people outside that can change our community. They revealed me that we still have hope, we can still have optimism. We can be outgoing people who are willing to work hard, to give their effort to mark a difference in our world, to show the planet that we will not give up and we will keep fighting for a good dawn.

Access taught me that there are still people with light inside, you must only look for them and never give up.

Your friend from Guatemala,

Felipe Torres

***BEAR Program:** Basic English for Access Recruitment, is a 96 hours program given to 128 students who will later participate in the selection process for the English Access Microscholarship Program.

My Experience in Access

My name is Mónica Cotom and I am a student of Access Quetzaltenango. Since I entered the program my life has changed. I have always been a little shy when I meet new people, but when I entered Access, I found a wonderful group of people who made me feel comfortable and happy to belong to them.

I have loved all the activities we have had; I feel that each of these bring us closer as a family. Yes, I consider my classmates and teachers more than that, they are my second family. They are an important part of my life, with them I have laughed, I have cried, and I have learned many things.

At Access I was able to accomplish something I have wanted to do for a long time, I was able to perform community service. In Access I learned that you must strive for your goals and that you must not be the same as others, you must be different, be that change in society. I learned that I must always give my best and help, whenever possible, to everyone who needs it. In Access I have been able to improve my level of English, something that in my opinion is very important to know. But, the lesson that has most marked my life is that you have to learn to value the opportunities that life gives to you.

At first, attending Access was a challenge for me, because I had to organize my time very well if I wanted to fulfill my home, school and Access tasks. I had to take a bus and then walk a little more to get there. I didn't have time to go to lunch at my house because I live very far of Access, so I had to eat my lunch in class, which, by then, was already cold. But all this didn't matter, I enjoyed go there and see my friends another day.

I will be honest, there were times when I wanted to resign because the pressure from the school was too much. But I didn't, my friends (teachers and classmates) were always there to support me and not only in academic matters. They were there every time I had a problem, no matter how small or big it was, they have always supported me unconditionally.

Since I met them, I have grown a lot as a person, I have wanted to improve more and more to be able to help more people like they have done with me. Access is a once in a lifetime opportunity and I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

- Mónica Cotom

Access Experience



A great opportunity came to my life, I was select for be part of Access in Quiche, it was in 2014-2015. I'm the first in my town in be select for study English in a program from the Embassy of the United States of America in Guatemala. I was studying bachillerato in a public school, everything in my life start to changed, I was teenager yet, but Access woke up on me a spirit of leadership stronger that before. I remember very clear my first class, I was very exited for the class, because I thought that the teaching would be in Spanish, but all were very different, I couldn't understand all the words in English, I felt confused in that time. I wanted to be a part, but my head didn't want to change the basic format (monolingual).

After time my life in the school start to change, my favorite course now was English, I could understand more thanks to my English teachers, of course they were only women, each one taught me different things for improve my mission and vision to impact my family, friends, community and my country. In short, they pushed me to strive to achieve my goals and dreams, and today I confirm it because I'm part of another embassy program.

In the development of the two years of study I can say in general that my experience in the program was great, as all the life there are bad moments and right moments too, but the best

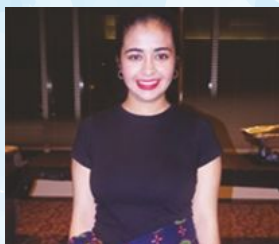
is to learn all time, no matter the situation. Thanks to Access I could discover my talents and abilities, because I live in a little town of Quiche, the stereotypes or labels that people put on the regions mark us, but Access believed in me, thus giving me the opportunity to end successfully.

Access as a process that I toke, but step by step, making some service community project in my town, I did that alone, because I was the unique from my town in the program, but when we can service to the community, we're bringing a breakthrough of heart to see better the situation. In my school I was select to take a medal of honor in the general graduation of bachilleres in Guatemala City, but it was possible thanks to the skills and tools learned in Access, specially the leadership.

Now I'm a teacher, I can speak English and continue collaborate in some programs to look the develop in my town, as a volunteer. If I went back to the past, I would say yes again to the Access opportunity a thousand times, because it opens doors to be better people and professionals.

- **Mario Daniel Cabrera Alvarez**, Ex-student of Access Program 2014-2015, Quiché, Guatemala.





My life full of open doors

Early years

I am Eslí Avendaño. I was born in January 27, 1996 in Guatemala City. My parents are Rosalba and Nehemias I was seven years when my brother Abel was born, after my parent's divorce we moved to Coban.

Elementary and middle school

I started 2nd grade elementary at Felipa Gomez school where I was always a good student and mentioned in the school honor's roll. The divorce of my parents drove me insane but the best way to deal with this was dreaming, following them and living in the best way I could. Instead of crying because I had a broken heart, I took a book, a notebook, or whatever I could to study, I found relief in learning.

English Engagement

I listened to English music because that reminded me of my father, but I could not understand the lyrics. One day when I was at my typing course I heard my teacher speaking in English so I asked her to teach me the language, she definitely said yes. I went home and I told my mom about my idea of learning english, but she asked me to wait for next year (2010) because she couldn't afford both courses at the same time. Of course, I understood because my mom was alone, but I knew her promise was true. The next year, on 2010; Access Program was announced at IGA (an English Academy in town) Cobán, the coordinator from my school gave some application forms, that same afternoon I asked my mom to take me there and I told her "Mom, If I get this, you won't have to pay for the English course". So, we went and I got the two years scholarship. I didn't know how amazing this opportunity was going to be. I graduated from Access in 2011 at the same time I finished middle school.

More opportunities

After Access Program, I was chosen to be in SEAL (a 10-month scholarship program for teaching techniques) Program on 2012, the same year that I started studying at Liceo Dr. Ricardo Bressani (high school name) with a full scholarship too. This year was very difficult because the two scholarships demanded a lot from my time. SEAL program was every weekday and on Saturdays I had to do Service-Learning teaching English to practice the techniques and methodology with real students which was challenging. That same year I won the second place in a Biology competition in school. I graduated from SEAL Program on December 2012 and from High school 2013

On 2014 I won the scholarship 100,000 strongers to study English for a year. I started studying International Agribusiness at ITMES University, and I got my first job as an English teacher in a private school at the age of 18. Today I continue working at this school I have been teaching for seven years middle and high school students.

On 2015 I got the ETP (English Teacher Program) scholarship, which help

me develop my English and teaching skills, in this program I made 6 month of teaching internship to students from a church. This program helped me to be a better teacher.

On 2016 I started my professional internship at Cacao Verapaz. This is a company that exports cocoa to US, Europe and Japan. There I learned about High Quality Standards of exportation, Sensorial Analysis of Cocoa, ISO, IAS and USDA certifications and traceability of products. I finished this internship on July 2017.

On 2017 I became an active volunteer at AJEDE (Department of state scholars association) by teaching in the free English Courses. That year I got the UGRAD (Global Undergraduate Exchange Program) scholarship. I was sent to Saint Catherine University at Minnesota for one semester (August-December 2017). I took 4 courses (12 credits) related with my field of study: economy, financial and business. Before going to the US I had to take the OPAL (Online Professional and Academic Learning) course and the TOEFL test. That was a breathtaking experience, my first time outside the country alone. The closing ceremony of this program was in Washington D.C. This program is sponsored by World Learning.

When I came back in 2018, I was volunteering at Centro Cultura y Arte where Access and SEAL program were taking place. That year I learned how to deal and manage those programs. I had good mentors such as Jennifer Barrios (who had been my first teacher in the English Programs), Rodrigo Martínez (Access Technical Coordinator), María Andrea Chang (AJEDE Co-founder) and Liliana de Nes (an experienced program manager too). Also, I was inspired by my Thai friend Thanyalak Thongee who was always drinking Bubble Tea at Saint Catherine campus. I have not tried this beverage before, it is delicious. So, I started my entrepreneurship on December 2018 called Tapioca Drinks -TAPS-, because is something new in Coban, for me it means extra income and an experience on managing a profitable project.

Better job opportunities

Thanks to the experience and volunteer work described above, in 2019 I was offered the position of Academic Coordinator Assistant for Access 1. Incredibly I was managing a program where I was a participant before. I could perfectly understand the fears on these new cohort of students. My small business -TAPS- was growing a little, this allowed me to participate in two main events of entrepreneurial competitions for investment.

Nowadays

I am currently in my last year of University and I am having better job opportunities because I have the position as Project Manager of the SEAL-BEAR program with Cooperativa Coban (the name of the provider). I would not have believed this two years ago, even five or seven years ago. I am working to be a better daughter, professional, citizen and continue dreaming to open doors for me and others.

The key to success is having courage and believing and trusting oneself.

- Eslí Avendaño

My Access Journey



My name is Erik Galvez and I will tell you how my Access experience has been. I am from Chiantla. Chiantla is a small town in Huehuetenango Guatemala. I have been an Access teacher since 2016, but before being a teacher, I was an Access student in 2010 – 2011. Being an Access is thus far the best thing in my life.

When I took the Access Program back then in 2010 it was the best thing in my life. I was studying high school and I was a regular student. Having an English course for me was impossible, but thanks to the Access Program I had the opportunity to study English for two years. In these two years, I reached an intermediate level of English. When I finished the course, I didn't keep in touch with my classmates in the Access Program. Now, that's one of the things I regret the most. Building a community makes all of us grow.

After I left the Access Program I wanted to become an English teacher, but I couldn't make it. After I finished Access I wanted to be an English teacher but there wasn't any place in my town where I could study to get a degree. Instead of that, I studied to be an elementary school teacher. When I got the degree, I didn't want to be in a classroom never again. Being a teacher was at the top of not doing jobs.

Although I didn't want to be a teacher, in 2016 my mind changed. Back then, I needed a job and I had the opportunity to be an assistant teacher in the Access Program. I got the opportunity and I just fell in love with the Program. I had the opportunity to teach teenager English such as my teachers did with me, but I also had the opportunity to teach so much more. I had the opportunity to teach them how to be leaders, how to solve problems, how to create opportunities, etc. At the end of 2016, I became an Access teacher. Right now, I can't imagine myself doing something that is not related to education.

The Access Program in Guatemala has changed my mind so many times. At first, I learned English, something that would have been impossible for me if I hadn't been in Access. I also got the chance to meet amazing people; my teachers when I was a student, my mentors when I was a rookie teacher, my colleagues in the current times, and of course, my students, without whom I couldn't be a teacher.

The Access Program opened the opportunity for me to reach my potential, now I am working hard to make more people reach theirs.

- Erik Galvez.

Service Learning from Access Program

My name is Clara Ajanel, I am from Chichicastenango, [Guatemala] and I was an access student. Being part of the Access family for me was a wonderful experience because, it gave me the opportunity to learn a new language. But what I like most about Access, is that it is not only learning to speak English, but it also helps us to improve, since we can learn very relevant knowledge in our learning and growth, such as teamwork, leadership and Service Learning. The experiences that I had in the access were very important to me and made me very knowledgeable, as they also gave me the opportunity to

help my community, doing helpful learning with my classmates in Access. I am truly grateful to the program for helping me grow and help other people. Access changed my life, and I consider it as a family. I liked that I lived with my classmates and teachers, because they changed my life in an incredible way. Access gave me the strength to believe in myself and to help other people around me, in some way. Because I could transmit the knowledge that I learned in Access. That's why one of my great experiences in my life is to have been part of the Access Program.

- Clara Ajanel

Little Things Helped me to be a Better Person

I am Jaqueline García, from Chichicastenango [Guatemala]. I started ACCESS in 2016 and I graduated in 2017. At the beginning it was difficult but I always tried to do what my teacher tell me, he taught me English, but also he helped me to improve many aspects of my life. In my school I wasn't a good student but my teacher helped me to be a better student because he taught me discipline, leadership, values, how to work as a team. I learned English but also things to improve myself. That little things helped me to be a better person. In 2019 I was in SEAL program

and I learned techniques of how to teach English, grammar, reading.

Nowadays I'm working as an Assistant teacher for SEAL teaching. I'm proud of myself because Access changed my life since the first day I went to my English Class. And I'm thankful with my teachers and the program because they gave me the opportunity to learn English and because they believe in me.

-Jaqueline García



Worthing Lessons

My name is Ericka Lizeth Cucul Pop I am 19 years old; I am in the first year of business administration at San Carlos de Guatemala University. I never really thought about where my life was going. I always believed life took me where I was supposed to go, I never



thought that I was the one who took myself where I wanted to go. Let me tell why and how I changed these thoughts.

When I became part of the Access Program (2015-2016), it helped me to find new strengths and capabilities within myself. I learned that I could help my community improve in many ways more than I ever thought. While I was getting involved in different activities in the class, such as the school's Government or the Service Learning that we did afterward, I noticed a change from negativism to a positive attitude. Now I know that hard work and a positive attitude is very important to grow up as a person and get good results.

The changes I went through during the program motivated me to apply to a third year scholarship, named SEAL, that in 10 months provides teaching techniques, because I knew that I was going to develop new skills and strategies to discover myself as a teacher, it was a very difficult year, however, each strategy that my teachers shared with me helped me, by applying it, with different people and even in my personal life. During that time there was a person who influenced my life a lot and it was my teacher Jennifer Barrios, she always told us "Things are done with love" and that shocked me so much that I could realize that it was true since it was not just about standing in front of a class, because at the end helping others is also part of teaching. After all that process, I became part of a youth association that gathers ex access students, named AJEDE, doing projects and making more friendships that today are like family to me.

Unexpected things happened to me, like supervising a kids program in 2018, during that year I met a great Coach in the field of teaching, who guided me and taught more techniques that an access teacher has to implement, and he gave me the opportunity of sharing time with the Access students as a teacher.

I have gone through many opportunities and processes, since I started the access program each year has been a challenge for me until today.

A great example of this was in 2019 when I started my first group as an Access teacher, I was studying my last year of high school, also I was part of the committee of a youth association that gathers ex access students, named AJEDE. It was a year with many responsibilities, days without sleep, days without sharing with my family and friends, but I don't regret about this, since my dream has always been to improve myself as an independent woman.

Now that I am still a teacher of the access program 2020, I have understood better that my task is not simply to teach the lesson within the four corners of the classroom, but to be like the second parent of the students and therefore, love and care for my students as if they are my siblings. Also, I know that I am a guide that will help them in different processes as my teachers did with me.

To sum it up, all that I mentioned before were lessons that helped me and motivated me to become a humble person and to continue growing as a person, today I feel happy and proud of what I have achieved at my young age, during these first 3 months of the year I have been studying college, and I have noticed how much I matured and the responsibility I have taken with my classmates and how I lead them to work as a team, abilities that had help me a lot in each community that I am part of, and this is thanks to each challenge I have had in the programs and the training that I have had as a teacher in the last 6 years of my life.

- Ericka Lizeth Cucul Pop

Access 2019-2020

Esquipulas



>> CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

In the classroom, students have developed critical thinking through Socratic circles implemented in the reading class, in which they used the Easy True Stories book to reinforce their reading skills. The readings have also helped them increase their vocabulary and be able to express their feelings on a journal in which they have been writing about their lives, their goals, their fears, and challenges. One activity that has impacted positively on students, is the Story Telling in which they had to create posters about specific topics they choose (the person they admire, their likes and dislikes, favorite sports, etc.); students decorated the poster and added some information to present it to their classmates.

At the beginning of each class, a student is in charge of conducting a warm up activity in order to get engaged since the beginning of the class and enjoy the activities that teachers prepare for them. During break one student is the guider; he/she gives a topic to her/his classmates to talk about it. The topics are always interesting to discuss, because those are related to news and actual events happening around the world. Break discussion-activities have helped them to increase their English production.

>> VOLUNTEER WORK ACTIVITIES:

Students have been actively involved in volunteer work and community projects; students helped as volunteers in the 21K (half marathon) being in charge of delivering hydration to the runners, cheering people, helping with first aid and recollecting trash. Students have also developed projects in which they improved playgrounds in different schools, they created and donated teaching materials for teachers to use in their classes such as flashcards, posters, markers, etc. Students have shown a commitment to contribute to their communities by teaching English free, donating food and clothes to poor families and selling food to raise money for their projects.

>> ACCESS STUDENTS BECAME VOLUNTEERS OF AJEDE:

Students got to know AJEDE committee in order to learn what is AJEDE, how it works and how to become a member of it. AJEDE is an association of former fellows of different programs funded by the State Department and the United States Embassy in Guatemala, committed through volunteering to promote leaders who contribute to the development of Guatemala. Most of the Access students became volunteers of AJEDE to develop projects in their community.

>> A TRIP TO THE VOLCANO:

Students had a trip to Ipala's Volcano; the purpose of the trip was to expose students to nature and create awareness about the importance of taking care of the environment. While students were hiking the volcano, they decided to recollect trash they found on their way to throw it to the trashcan when they come up to the top. At the top, they had a guided trip to the view of the lake at the top of the volcano. After the trip, students have been aware of the importance of taking care of the environment and they have been sharing good practices to protect it.

>> ACCESS ALUMNI OPINIONS:

Access has been the best experience in many lives, for the tools that this amazing program an all the people that work in there gives to students.

"Access micro scholarship program entirely changed my life; a program which is not only about learning English but developing leadership skills and learn how to work as a team. These components aim to facilitate the social mobility of the participants who join this incredible program".

- Heylin Duarte (alumni 2013-2014)– current teacher at the Access program"

"Being honest my Access experience was not easy and I guess that was the idea, this experience took me out of the easy things."

- Eduardo Contreras (alumni 2015-2016) "Access, one of the best experiences of my life."

- Fares Guerra (alumni 2016-2017)





Seal Program

[wrongly known as: the third year of Access]

SERVICE LEARNING

English usage Access engagement Leadership



Hello everybody! This is Gaby and Esdras writing to you. We are from Esquipulas (a very catholic town of Guatemala). We want to let you know about SEAL Program, which we will describe as a wonderful opportunity where students grow, sharpen their skills and become English Teachers! Yes, English teachers! Let us tell you how: the SEAL Program is specifically a program from the US Embassy in Guatemala, not from Washington. SEAL students are those



Guatemala and the best is that they were part of the amazing Access Program and this is a way to see results from our students after those 2 challenging years. During these days, they have been learning different topics, stuff and strategies about

teaching English. In Esquipulas, Gaby and I have the pleasure to be the teachers from SEAL. Now in April, it was supposed students were going to start teaching. So, besides belonging to the SEAL program, our SEAL students have to run a project called BEAR (Basic English for Access recruitment), in this program



who completed the 2 years of Access. In Guatemala if you finished successfully the Access program, you can become part of the SEAL program, of course if you aspire to teach English to others. The total amount of students is 17. Yes, 17

excellent students who are into learning how to teach English and willing to create a positive impact in our community.

SEAL is in exactly 7 sites of Guatemala: Esquipulas, Cobán, Xela, Guatemala City, Huehuetenango, Chichicastenango and Sololá. Imagine 119 students getting prepared to become teachers in

our SEAL students pair up, and they both have to teach Basic English to 16 teens between the ages of 14 and 16 for Seal students to practice and apply what they have learned so far. And you know what is the most wonderful thing from this program, our SEAL students are around 17 years old mostly!



This program impacts in many different ways in our community. SEAL students earn experience by teaching Basic English to Bear students which are almost the same age of them.. And the best, more students get interest into the English language.



Access is my key to success.



My name is L.Venu. I joined in the Access class when I was studying in 7th class. Now I am studying in 9th class and I am from G.H.S Shaikpet, Hyderabad, Telangana. There are five members in my family.

Before I came to access, I was completely in-confident to speak in front of my class.



I was not able to talk in English. I also used to be aggressive towards others when if they said anything negative about me. I was not able to work and collaborate in a team as I did not listen



to others and insisted that they followed me.

Being an access student I have participated in many competitions, from those I would like to share some.

I went to an English exam competition called Toefl, which is conducted by Pega foundation at state level. This exam was all about three skills and those are listening, writing and speaking. In those categories I really performed marvelously in the

competition, specially speaking. When they called me to speak, I was really nervous. But I suppressed my nervousness and I



spoke very confidently in English in front of everyone. And this was all because of the Access class. We did many activities to improve our listening, speaking writing reading skills, because of those activities I performed very well in exam.

After this competition I participated in another competition also, called Agastya. That was a science fair competition, I was selected to state level and I made a model called Blind assist glove that was conducted for three days, first two days we have to explain our model to children from other school. I explained them with creativity which I learned in access I did the same when the judges came to me.

Now I am conducting English tuition for 1st to 5th classes and it's all because my hard work in access class and school.

- L. Venu





Access is my success

Hello! My name is n.mahesh nayak. I am studying in class 10 in G.H.S. Shaikpet in Hyderabad. I was born in a poor family. Before joining in Access class I didn't know how to present a project and I didn't know how to speak correct English. I also didn't understand English. But I am a good learner and good dancer.



By joining in Access I learnt how to speak good English. And I improved my learning skills and writing skills. I also learnt how to teach others. Because I worked in groups my friends asked me for help and I helped them. That's why I became more confident. Now I feel confident to take up many responsibilities in school



and at home. In the Access we have done a lot of presentations. By making presentation I learnt correct body language and to speak in English loudly and clearly.

In Access class we learnt about America. We also learnt



about other countries and their cultures. We celebrated many festivals of USA. My teacher says that I am a good dancer and creative and choreographer. Our access teacher gave us a song and I choreographed some dance steps for that song. In access we made many posters and drawings. We also did many



skits. I participated in a lot of dance competitions and I won many prizes and certificates. I won a gold medal in painting competition organised by ISHVA foundation. And I also went to state level in KALA USTAv dance competition I won the prize. Now I have minimum 18-20 certificates now I am a good English speaker in class we also participated in AGASTYA science competition. I won a water filter and table met in CHIGURU dance competition in the year of 2018-19. I also participated in national book fair dance and solo dance competition. We won a prize in that competition.

Because of my Access class became creative and confident. I recently lost my father after my class 9 exams. In this situation, I am still confident about my skills and my studies. So this is my Access Success story.

- N. Mahesh Nayak

Access My Stepping –Stone To Success



Hello.....! This is Yugender from 10th grade. I joined in Access class when I was in 8th class. My school's name is G.H.S Shaikpet in Hyderabad, Telangana. I am from a family of 6 members. I have 3 sisters Nirmalam, Shirisha and Laxmi. My father's name is Eshwer and my mother's name is Seethamma.

I would like to say one thing that, before I joined in Access I could not speak proper English and I used to make many mistakes while speaking. Trust me after being a part of access I won

many prizes in many competitions.

Actually I am good at painting, but the thing is, that after painting a picture we must explain that painting to the judge. So that can score 50% marks in competition.

In 9th class I went to a painting competition called "Kala Ustav" and because of explaining my painting I got selected in state level. I got selected because my explanation was very good. Some 4-5 students had painted better than me but they did not speak well but I did that.

The D.E.O of Hyderabad gave me a certificate

After being a part of Access my stage fear vanished from my presentations and I got a lot of confidence and courage in studies too.



Another achievement of my life came through a foundation called "Anveshna".

This foundation conducted a science module competition for

engineering students along with other school students. We had to prepare a module by using technology (sensors). But it had to be a solution for a problem. After struggling for many days, we prepared a module for a problem called "tract fault detector". It would detect the cracks on track. We prepared a module like a 4 Wheeler car.

Only 10 days remained for the presentation and I was selected along with a classmate to explain the project. My partner was from Telugu medium so she couldn't explain much in English. Hence, I had to explain everything. With a lot of hard work I prepared everything.



The Program was for 3 days. A total of 105 projects had participated in competition. I lost my hopes after seeing those projects I thought that "I may not win the competition". Those judges were very strict. They were asking many questions for every project. Though, I was tensed but I explained well. When the result was announced, I kept my fingers crossed. Later I was surprised to know that I was also a winner. As a prize, I got 5000 cash prize, a gold medal, certificate and a Dell laptop.

- ✦ Yet I have many certificates, prizes and medals too
- ✦ I am so fortunate to be a part of Access.
- ✦ I have met many people from prestigious companies only because of Access.
- ✦ I had written many essays because of only Access.
- ✦ Access made my learning interesting and fun.

- N. Yugender



Access is my Inspiration



My name is Anjali. I am an access student. I am studying in 10th class. I am from Government High School Shaikpet, Hyderabad, Telanganna. We are 5 members in my family. My mother's name is Saraswathi. She works as a housekeeper. My father name is Kasim. He works as a hardware Engineer. I have two brothers. Their names are Prakash and Sunil.

Before joining access class, I always spoke in Telugu and made many grammar mistakes in English.

When I joined access classes, I started learning how to speak in English and how to correct grammar mistakes.

Now I can speak in English and with very few mistakes.

We participated in mid-term intensive programme along with



students from Ahad school. We made friends with them and enjoyed lot. We learnt about traffic rules, dance, singing songs and puppetry, theatre, composting and many more things. The program was for 6 days. On the last day, we went to the swimming pool too!

Because of attending access classes, I could just change my behaviour. When I learnt in the class about sports persons, I get inspiration. I also went to Dell for many programmes.



I want to be many things in my life. Like teacher, singer, dancer, actress, sportsperson and a police woman. But my parents don't want to send me to school for education. I just feel very sad about education and goals. All the time I keep thinking about education and goals. How can I reach my goals if my parents behave like this?



When I joined in access class, I learnt about so many things and how can we reach the goals. For Women's history month, we learnt about many inspiring women. I learnt about those women and how they have reached their goals in their lives. Then I decided that I can also

reach my goals. I have started facing problems coming from my family member.

I am determined to face all problems and reach my goals and become something in life.

- Anjali.

Access Life After Sports Journalism



My journey as an Access teacher has been one of self discovery. When I joined the program back in 2017, little did I realize how much I would be enjoying this new venture, having just switched careers after being a Sports Journalist for 19 years.

I had never taught prior to joining Access and so did not carry any baggage with me. I remember during the interview, I had said I would not have to think 'out-of-the-box' since I did not see any 'box' in the first place.

My first day in an Access class went just as I had expected. I tried to be creative even with the introductions and the students warmed up to me right from the word go. It took me about three classes to identify who was what with regard to their strengths in English and I always made sure thereafter that whenever they worked in groups, I made the weaker students sit with the stronger ones and the results showed.

I am a great believer in imbibing critical thinking skills in the classroom. Among my best practices is making them do activities related to general knowledge and current affairs. I encouraged them to read newspapers and in due course they did activities on creating newspapers themselves. It helped them in identifying fake news and understand the world around them much better.

There were a lot of enhancement programs conducted to enhance the students' life skills and during one of the camps, the students cooked several items without fire and even sold them in their community by making sales pitches in English. Understandably, their parents were proud of them.

Over the two years, the students learnt forum theatre and digital storytelling among other things and on a personal level, I got to interact with some very talented student leaders. I am happy that I could enrich their lives just as they have enriched mine thanks to this wonderful program.

- Jaydip Sengupta, Access Teacher, Kolkata, India.

Access Journey of Aidai



Hello World, my name is Aidai which means "Like Moon" "Bright as Moon" or "beautiful like Moon" from my ancient language with the long history if you translate it into the English, I learned it only few years ago. Did you ever interest in a difference between the languages? Because we have over 300 languages in entire world, and once I had a dream to learn all of them. My life can be divided into many different parts, you know we all have times when we change and we become something else, that particular moment can be the new beginning for the next part. People may not notice sometimes but the ones that had a valuable experience would be memorable. It is always natural to forget some things happened during our lives but there is also another meaning for it, the one I read from the magazine- "We always forget the things we do not want to remember, or the ones that doesn't have any meaning behind it". Such kind of moment for me was my middle school, when my active life where I only did the things I enjoyed stopped and start the life where I wanted to study but later, I realized that it didn't worked well and now I do not remember what I did back then. After couple of years I had a chance to explore the things I really enjoyed and I don't regret the choices I have made because all the experiences have made me who I am. Moreover, when I was little girl, I had a friend who sang a song fluently in English that amazed me so much and I

had a dream that one day I would be able to understand and sing along with her which was the first motivation for me to study this incredible language. As movie "secret" says our thoughts are material later in 2016 I joined Access Micro Scholarship program which changed my life upside down and became the new beginning for the next part. I would never think that only two years could change person even more than for 5 years. Just comparing me and me after knowing English language and also the person who follows her dreams can show a big difference. Throughout the time I have spent in this program all the student opened new things or even a new person that they never knew about. The best thing during this all was that I learned the language and the leadership skills which impacted my future achievements such as visiting and living in the USA for about a year as an American teenager and being an alumnus of FLEX and the WYLET programs. However, this is not all the things I have been able to achieve but also, I have made many more future goals for myself. Knowing the world wide language is the super power that we can use for the better future and life as a student I can surely say that this definitely helped me with the choice of my future and what I want to do with the language is to sing along with my friend.

- Aidai



Access is the door to get the success in student life

Hello everyone! It has been almost 2 years in Access. My all teachers and friends are too friendly. I fell in love with them and I am feeling so glad to be a member of Access. It's a golden opportunity to me. I was in class 7 when I joined access class. Now I am in class 9. I have learnt many things in Access class. I got the opportunity to learn about Coursera here. I have also got the certificate from Coursera. I am also learning about blogging and others.

I have improved my grammar, spelling, speaking skills and other things here. I got the chance to attend in camp in Pokhara and visited many places of Pokhara like Pokhara University, Davi's Fall, Museums, etc. I enjoy the classes of Access. I have learnt those things which i could not learn in school. The knowledge of

books is not enough for students. Extra knowledge is also very much important for students to get success in their life.

These two years are heart touching memory of my life forever. Access is the door to get the success in student life. It is my pleasure to be a part of Access. I have got much knowledge, new friends and new experience in my life. Access has given me the knowledge and love in my life.

Thank you.

- Sudeep Bhatta, Access Nuwakot



Access Created a Garden for us

I am Anil Tamang from Nuwakot Access Center, Nepal. I am at the age of sweet 16. I study in Grade 9. I am so lucky to be in this class and be a part of it.

First of all, I want to thank my parents who allowed me to join Access despite of their day and night's hard labor. Secondly, I want to thank my teachers who encouraged me to apply in this program. I thank NELTA for selecting me in this program.

Before joining Access, I was such a type of boy who could not face the mass, who was always nervous to communicate with friends and teachers. But nowadays, I can communicate with my friends and teachers. I ask any questions without hesitation. I have learned many things in Access class. It is totally different than our regular class. Learning through Multimedia by two teachers at a same time is really very different experience in my life. Access teaches us practically. We can learn many social knowledge by doing community services, celebrating different occasions, sharing our views/ thoughts with different teachers and friends, and visiting different historical places. It is very good and effective way of learning.

I heartily thank to the program organizing committee who especially understood the problems of the students of

government schools. I am also very thankful to our instructors who help us to improve our grammar, speak in English and give their valuable time. The course book that provided by NELTA has become the plus point for our studies.

In this class, I have learnt about different western cultures like Thanksgiving Day, Christmas, Halloween, and other exciting festivals. In Access, the way of teaching and learning is different. So we learn many different things in an easy way. I have got the great opportunity to learn about Computer and Internet World. Not only me but also all of us are very lucky to get this platform.

Access created a garden for us: a garden of knowledge and love. So, by this knowledge and love, we, forty stars, will be shining at the top.

At last I would like to thank NELTA for providing this golden opportunity. Access camp was the most memorable event of my life. I just want to share that this access class is the motivation for every government school's students like me. I hope that Access will continue to improve lifestyle of poor children.

- Anil Tamang ,Nuwakot Access Center, Nepal

Access, a Milestone for Success



In the words of Henry Ford, 'Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress and working together is success.' Exactly in the same way, Access provides the opportunity to come together, keeps us together, and provides favorable environment to work together which I think is the milestone for success.

activities like creative writing, personality development, time management, public speaking, and volunteerism and so on. These activities boost a person up to deserve the zenith in his/her life. The activities like cultural celebration of Nepali and American festivities help the Access students to be familiar with the special features of those cultures and build the sense of respect for an interest in other culture, customs and rituals. This helps the students to build the rapport with others and adjust according to the existing situation which is a further step for success.

Techniques and activities that Access teachers use in the Access classes are to huge extent relevant to create learning environment. Syllabus has been designed by the experts so as to cater the needs of the day and sustain oneself in the globalized era. The salient features of the Access class where there are ample rooms for the students' creation and production are depicted down in points:

- authentic and meaningful language use
- personalized context
- multicultural perspective
- interaction and co-operation
- students' presentation and reflection

These above points reveal that English language learning takes place in interactive manner which yields better in mastering the four language skills that are inevitable to achieve success.

Moreover, Access teachers are also groomed with ICT. The students are provided with ample opportunities to operate computers and are guided to surf the internet. Furthermore, students are made capable to create their own e-mail account, blog and enroll in online courses and use ICT in their own for their academic excellence. These all the aspects are the keys to be a successful person in the present arena.

Access students are involved in different enhancement

Similarly, community services like cleaning parks, hospitals, streets, and temples, visiting elderly homes, co-operating with traffic management and so on help the Access students to develop the sense of community service i.e. the sense of doing something for others that obviously pave the path for success. In the same way, the intensive sessions in the Access Intensive Camp help the students to bolster their horizon of knowledge and skills.

Overall, addressing the three main areas i.e. English language acquisition, culture and personality development, Access aims to change the life of the students improving their social skills and leadership. It develops social awareness about the problems of country and ways to solve them.

These all the above facts lead me to say that Access is of course a milestone for success. So make the best use of Access.

Thank You!

Reference:

Official Handbook (2015). English Access Microscholarship Program.

Man Bahadur Khadka, Former Access Instructor, Access Center Banke, Nepal





My Experience in Access

Hi! It's me Riya Rimal. When I was studying in class 8, the teachers informed me about Access Class. At first I was not interested to join in it but later I changed my mind and filled up the form for entrance and later I was selected.

When I entered the institute for study, I was surprised because it was different than my imagination. I thought it is also same as other school classes or institutions. The teaching styles by two teachers, class environment and disciplining style are the plus point to achieve the goals of students. It has also friendly environment between teachers and students. I am really proud to be a part of this program because the language that provides here is really important for the life time. Because it is an international language and greatest value in this age. It is most widely used in the communicating around the world. Moreover the internet sites are in English and we can see the other languages sites gives options to translate into English and a lot of information we will find that is written in English. Except it, I have got the opportunity to develop four skills of language: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is the best platform for the students of government schools of Nepal. I am more

confident than before on these skills, it means I have developed these skills through the classes of Access.

Likewise, it has also provided the school students to do social welfare and made to be a mankind. It has also activated the students through different games, celebrations, extra-activities and practical works in the classes. Not only this, I have learnt to use computer and internet like blogging, coursera, power point presentation, typing, using gmail, facebook, etc. This class has made me punctual, loyal, decent, honest and kind. It has helped me to maintain my personality and develop into maturity.

I have collected the greatest experience in short time in my life and the time I have spent here really will be memorable throughout the life. I would like to say thank to NELTA for providing us this platform to develop ourselves and to experience new world in this young age and let us to develop our passion in life.

Thank you.

- **Riya Rimal**, Nuwakot Access, Nepal



Our journey through English Access Microscholarship Program

My name is Muhammad Shahwaiz .I'm 14 years old.I'm a Pakistani and i'm a part of English Access microscholarship program.My journey through this program has been a great one.I have met some great teachers in this program.This program has helped me not only to become a better student but a better person as well.It has taught me to care for the people around me the community through community services such as: Awareness about Cyber crime,smoking,smog etc. It has taught me equality through celebrations like: Women's Day,Interfaith Harmony week,Christmas,Black history month,Thanks giving and many more.Above all it has believed in me and has aided me with essential classes to achieve it like :career counselling,personality grooming and Communication strategies.I joined this Program because of its unique and effective way of teaching the language but it has given so much more.I truly love this Program.

- **Muhammad Shahwaiz**, English Access Microscholarship program DGKHAN, Access Student, Pakistan

I,m abdullah . i, m access student . I joined access in July 2019. my first day was my welcome day. In rest of the days I did many activities all of those days were amazing and interesting. All the activities that I did were full of knowledge . in July, we had a journey to Multan . it was inauguration ceremony. We went Multan by bus .it was wonderful day of my life I enjoyed a lot . the most interesting thing I met with English people and got a certificate .we took lunch and came back to home . in journey we sang a song with our teacher mam Warda . I had many online sessions with the teachers of foreign countries . I celebrated many days. All the days were amazing . we got a lot of knowledge during those sessions .I got a lot of confidence from this class. In celebrations we get delicious food . we get micro scholarship from this program . all of my access teachers are very good the always help us.I love access. ♥

- **Abdullah**, English Access Microscholarship program DGKHAN, Access Student, Pakistan

Access program is not only about learning language or understanding of one culture but it teaches about values and encourages collaboration



Hi, this is Syeda Warda Batool Rizvi from Pakistan. I'm from DGKHAN I teach as a Lecturer of English Literature in university of Education DGKHAN campus and also an Access Teacher. Its my first time being the part of English Access Microscholarship program, before it i haven't heard about it. I always believe in freedom specially in learning because i observe in my surrounding students are given less freedom and specially methodology of teaching English language is not communicative. I believe students fail in English because of their zero understanding of language ans subject. So, i always seek for an opportunity where i can teach with freedom and gladly I've become the part of this amazing program. In Access classes not only i enjoy the liberty of teaching and choosing methods but also my students do the same opportunity. We all realise that Access classes are actually window to communicate with the world by shattering the old ideas and methods. Other than

this all the given trainings related to Teaching English Language help me a lot to make my teaching effective.



Access program is not only about learning language or understanding of one culture but it teaches about values and encourages collaboration among communities. I learned that how to

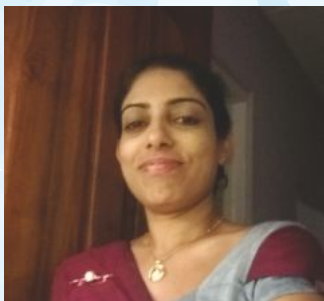
communicate with other communities through service projects. Its more than language teaching, specially it improves one's abilities and shapes personality. Through the platform of English Access program, i learned more about using technology and media for teaching and communicating with other Access teachers around the world. I have wonderful journey of Access and looking forward to more adventures in my Access Journey.

- Syeda Warda Batool Rizvi, Access Teacher, Pakistan.





My Access Journey To Nepal...



The South Asian Access Summit was started at Kathmandu, Nepal from 13th November to 19th November 2019. It was held at The Malla Hotel, Kathmandu. We were given rooms with all the facilities and the food were also delicious with different

items. It was actually awesome experience in tasting various food items in countries. We enjoyed lot. The hotel accommodation and the service were gracious.

At the very beginning of Ryan's Session, as I remember in day 2, that means 14th November, I myself and Maheshija an access teacher from Jaffna centre, we got together and did a nice presentation on our country on our country. Our other friends congratulated and thanked us in many ways and also we got a chance to listen the presentations on other countries, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India as well. From that, we had a great opportunity of knowing others as well as sharing ideas and having friendship with them.

In Jennifer's session, we were engaging with digital community of practice, functioning as a Learning Management System. She guided us on connecting classroom; creating Virtual Learning Communities. We discussed many things regarding social media, specially on face book. We shared ideas on the advantages & disadvantages of using face book as a kind of social media. There I could understand that the pros and cons of the platforms of Google classroom and the Edmodo classroom. Not only that, we created a poster also on our favorite platform. So I learnt three options for an effective platform for my virtual learning community. We had a nice screen casting session with the presentation on our own country that we did for Ryan's session. Of course, it was an amazing experience engaging with our colleagues and students through virtual platform of choice. I experienced it well and started to think in new ways of connecting with students. What a marvelous event I had on Jennifer's session.

The days with Caitlin Downs were really wonderful and loveable sessions. I love her very much specially her appearance. In her sessions, we prepared Public Service Announcement (PSA) which was filmed during the Media Advocacy. It was focused on raising awareness for an environmental issue of our choice.

My team also consisted with 2 Nepalians, Indians, Pakistani, including me. We had a PSA on poor attendance in access classroom due to parents' negligence. It was very entertained time and I had much pleasure in that session. And also we had thoughtful & effective discussions on social media usage, rights and responsibilities. And myself personally learnt on how to set up Twitter and Instagram accounts to share our things with others using Hashtah ###

"Showcase" in the sense was a meaningful time that we spent everyday. Each colleague in T1 group shared their experiences of their access classrooms and how the classes were going on as well as the Community Service Projects they had launched successfully. By listening to their presentations and the short video clips, they had already presented about their access classrooms amazingly and really fascinating. It was attracted by all of the country friends as well as our English Language Fellow Ms. Nicole Knighten, Regional English Language Officer Mr. Jerry Frank, Mr. Abdul Majeed, Ms. Maria Snarski. I would like to offer my great thanks to all the officers creating a wonderful session with the friends of other countries. I could have learnt many things on access classes and work with youngsters for doing a great service to the community.

"Cultural Show" was a ceremonial finishing of South Asian Access Summit. It was an awe – inspiring event with meeting all the Access teachers & Alumni with their miraculous performances. Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and also our country Sri Lanka represented their cultural events through costumes, dances, songs and multi-outstanding endowments. I myself presented a "Kandyan Dancing" to show my access friends in other countries, the prominent and outstanding features of Sri Lanka culture. All the spectators in the audience expressed their great thanks to me and our group of presenting a wonderful performance. Our Alumni also presented their talents in a mixed dance with the styles in dancing and a song sung by Riskiya and Maheshija in Tamil medium. Another surprising fashion show of our communities and a finally group song with all the communities to show that we are living with much peace & harmony in the land.

THANK YOU ACCESS.....!!!! IT WOULD BE A STRONG CHAIN ONE DAY.

- Miss. Mahesha Kalpani, An Access Teacher from Sri Lanka.

Experience of My Access Class



It's an incredible opportunity to work as an Access teacher in Sri Lanka as the chances are earned among high competitions. I joined my Access teaching in 2009 after undergoing several interviews in the system. My hometown Puttalam was the second

Access centre in Sri Lanka, selected by the American Centre. As Puttalam has a multi-religious and a multi-cultural background, it's easy for them to select the students for the Access learning.

It's a wonderful experience to introduce the American Culture and Literature to the students, coming from various ethnic background. It is easy for me to mingle with the students because they are very creative and innovative. Puttalam is an open platform for students to work with different communities such as Schools, Business centres, Local Authorities, Health Departments and Hospitals and IT providing organizations.

It's a great chance to gather experience, working with different type of people with different aspects. It's possible to bridge the Access students with the community easily to work for them. When the community faces any kind of catastrophic situation, the Access students are ready to work as volunteers with the Welfare Organizations. They are practiced, creating Awareness Campaigns by posting videos on social media and drawing posters to draw the attention of the public.

I'm so delighted when my Access students participate in the

National Youth Model United Nations conference annually and receive awards. I am really over the moon when they organize Puttalam Model United Nations conference every year with the essence of Global goals. I can give them training in public speaking with the help of Toast Master programme.

When I was given the golden opportunity to participate as a facilitator in the South Asian Youth Summit held in the USA, Pittsburg in 2011 associated with 7 students from Sri Lanka, I could make a tight bond with other Access teachers from Maldives and Nepal. It's an unrestricted opening to share our teaching experience as well as best practices we do in our country.

Another unforgettable experience I have gained by taking part in the NELTA Summit 2019 where I could meet a lot of intellectuals from the South Asian Region. The relationship that we have created is everlasting.

We must honour the American Centre for offering us some exclusive training sessions and online courses. I am very glad to say that I have completed TET online course offered by Maryland University, USA. My sincere gratitude goes to the American centre who has taken immense efforts to make us outstanding in the field.

I am so proud and privileged to be the Access Teacher in Sri Lanka because obviously it's a wide open chance to show our commitment and dedication to the entire world.

- Fathima Riskiya, An Access Teacher Sri Lanka.





My Access Story

I am Yusufjon Naimov, Alumnus of English Access Microscholarship program in Tajikistan 2016 – 2018. Now I am in Russia and Studying in medical university. Because of the COVID-19 virus we are studying online now.



When I studied in 9 grade. I heard about Access program that the examination is started. Then I went to the NGO Tomiris and I passed the exam, there I wrote an essay about How English Language would help me in the future. The essay was in Tajik language. After two weeks they called me and they said that I might enter to the program, and I became a student of Access program. I was very happy. We were 28 students and they divided us into the two groups. Then we



studied two hours a day, three days a week. Every Thursday we had guest from America for one years. She was Leila Lucia. We had conversation with her every Thursday. Others days we learnt English from Headway (book). The organizer of Access program was US Embassy and the project was in NGO Tomiris. In Access program we learnt about Traditions in America, leadership, how to organize a group, how to make a debate. Also we had experience in Debate and we have been attendants in Debate club. One day in a month we had a video conference with the students that are studying in others country. In the second year of Access program we made presentation about some topics and we presented in the university and schools because to make better our speaking. And also we celebrated many American and Tajik holidays. Also in Holidays We conducted a ceremony for disabled people. And we gave them gifts and other present.

During the Access program we had a lot of trip and we went

to the camps for 15 days. We had a trip in Historical places in my country. One of them is Hisor Fortress. I am sharing you pictures of myself in this place. And we were in two camps. There we had conversation with American people and we met US Ambassador and had trainings. That was very wonderful for us.



During the Access program we taught English 20 students from Universities and schools, and we attendant in Tourism training, we got the international certificates from Tourism organization in our country. That was a little information about how had gone my Access program.

Yusufjon Naimov, Alumnus of English Access Microscholarship program in Tajikistan 2016 – 2018.





ACCESS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM BRINGS NEW HOPE FOR ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS AND INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES AWAKE THEIR LANGUAGE ABILITY.

I would like to share with all the other Access teachers in the world the story about my students and say with you that “Nothing is impossible”.

I have been teaching in a provincial boarding high school for ethnic minority students in a mountainous province in the north of Viet Nam for more than 10 years. During 10 years, I have witnessed the difficulties that students and teachers in remote and mountainous areas are facing. The students in

to English day by day. Eventually, I chose interactive activities in my lessons and my enhancement activities.

In interactive classroom instruction, various activities were used depending on the lesson's goals and objectives. These activities included, but were not limited to, information gap, conversation grid, ordering and sorting, problem-solving, discussions, group presentation and games. These activities brought many benefits for me and my learners as well.



Ethnic Minority Boarding High school belong to different ethnic minority groups such as the Muong, the Tay, the Thai and the H'Mong... Most of them come from poor and low-income families, which prevents them from studying. Almost all of their parents are farmers or low-income workers; however, they always want their children to have bright future and better lives. And, there is a fact that students have fewer chances to study English than other learners. In their opinion, English is the most difficult subject and they do not want to pay attention to it. When Access scholarship was opened in my school in 2017, it attracted all of students' attention. 25 students were selected after a pre-test and an interview. At first, all the students were afraid of speaking English, they listened more but spoke less, which may be the problem that I believe many other Access teachers teaching in remote areas have to face up with. “How to help students overcome their language barriers? How to help them access to English and use English in communicating?” The questions burdened my mind. As an Access teacher, I needed to change the ways to teach them and helped them to expose

In each in-class activities, Access students had more chances to communicate with the other students as well as teachers in English. The classroom became the first speaking environment for the students to practice. Students overcame their own language barriers and achieved their learning goals. They dared to use English to talk to their friends and teachers, to express their feelings and present about their start-up ideas...There is a fact that I want to share with other teachers: By designing different interactive activities in the classroom, the teachers create good chances for learners to expose to English and use English to communicate. Only by this way, students turn the language into the “living” one, not a dead language. When teachers create a variety of learning activities, they employ different strategies for attaining the learning outcomes. In doing so, teachers will be more likely to appeal to the different learning styles that are present in the student population. They will also create opportunities for students to be exposed to diverse perspectives and to “stretch” themselves by trying new ways of studying. When students take part in classroom activities such

as pair work, group work or project work they have to talk with their friends using the language they are learning so they can learn from their friends and correct themselves. Moreover, they are motivated because every student has many opportunities to perform their duties and express themselves. Thanks to this, they enrich their knowledge about language and improve their language skills.

interactive activities in language classrooms have a close-knit relationship with the success of teachers and learners in these classes. They not only promote teaching and learning activities but also create speaking environment for learners to communicate in the language that they are learning. Thanks to this, they are confident to use the language in communication in real life. Moreover, learners are motivated and become more



In order to enhance the learner's own personal experiences and link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom, I also used interactive activities in enhancement activities such as celebrating Halloween, Christmas.... especially, doing volunteer work. Celebrating these festivals helped students had deeper understanding about culture of some English speaking countries and grew to love the language they were learning. In volunteer work, students would learn more about "give and take" and interacted with the real world around them to improve their life skills and self-esteem.

All in all, after two years I have seen my students' mature in language competence and personalities. I can confirm that

active in their studying. They feel excited about learning the second language and try their best to make progress. Although, designing these activities may waste little time, their benefits are enormous and they are quite easy to design. Taking full advantages of these activities, Access teachers will make their lessons more and more interesting and get better results in their occupation. I will pursue 2 more years with new Access classes and continue to use interactive activities in my classes.

Ms. Ngoc Thi Hai Pham, Tuyen Quang Ethnic Boarding High school, E-Teacher 2016, Access teacher in Viet Nam.





ENGLISH ACCESS MICROSCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM A TRIGGER TO EMPOWER STUDENT AGENCY

I. Settings & participants

The program was implemented at Tay Bac University in remote mountainous Son La where the majority of the population are of low socio-economic and educational background and of ethnic minority groups.

Lecturers are highly qualified of English with C1 level to CEFR or IELTS 7.0 and have had many academic and practical experiences. Based on the test and interview results, 21 students aged 15-18 were selected from 3 high schools in Son La City.

to December 2015 with the platform of blended learning which included both face-to-face training and online supporting.

III. Results

During the program, different assessment tools were used including pre-while-post tests, interviews, surveys, observations, reflections via Facebook posts, thank-you notes/emails.

From academic performance, achievement and test results,



II. Design

Syllabus

During 2 years of the program, 6 modules were included in the syllabus: (1) English language in which students learned the four language skills and knowledge twice a week (3 hours/ session); (2) American culture with 3D Trace Effects game within 6 weeks and six American studies lectures; (3) soft skills in which students participated in training workshops and extra-curricular activities; (4) field trips and youth camps (every three months, students had a trip to a historical site in Vietnam where they had chances to stay with the locals, study the history, practice English with foreigners, and join cultural activities); (5) group projects including video contest, game shows and environment project; (6) community service activities including fund-raising for disadvantaged, orphan and minority children, and supporting wounded soldiers and martyrs' families.

Delivery:

Access program was implemented in 15 months, from June 2014

students' English Language Competence has been greatly upgraded. Particularly, 66.7% of the pre-intermediate level students have become the intermediate users, 14.3% the upper intermediate, and 4.7% the advanced (IELTS 7.0). In addition, after graduating from high school, one student got her fully funded scholarship to study Bachelor and Master Degree in Finland, 15 students studied their Bachelors at top universities in Vietnam. Among them, there were 5 students studied English as their major and 8 students were exempt to study English at universities. Data collected from surveys,

interviews and reflections focusing on program activity satisfaction, overall experience and desire to continue showed that more than 81% of involved participants had very positive perspectives on the program with the average rating were respectively 8.6, 8.3 and 8.8 out of 10. Furthermore, their self-confidence and self-esteem greatly enhanced.

IV. Student Agency - Voice, Choice & Ownership

I had chance to work with Access students in all six modules, witnessed their development within 2 years of the program and

afterwards, I have been impressed most by their agency. From the very early of the project, students' perspectives and opinions were always respected and valued; thus, they were greatly involved in designing solutions to their learning difficulties. For instance, based on students' weekly reflections on lecturers' teaching performance and approaches and provide suggestions for improvement, lecturers would have adaptations to better fit students' needs, interests, levels and styles. In addition, students usually worked with the lecturers on what to be learnt and how their learning would be. In Access class, students were

or to debate hot global issues.

Attending Access Program, besides academic learning activities, students had opportunities to actively participate in different community activities and projects and to make a lot of decisions which greatly enriched their educational experiences. With the support and mentor from lecturers, students worked together to make plans, design activities, assign tasks and implement the community service projects such as Mid-Autumn Festival for disadvantaged and minority children, International Children



put into the center of the educational process, so they played the very active roles in interactive and collaborative activities. It cannot be denied that Access program has significantly helped to boost recipients' self-confidence to communicate with foreigners in English. In the first field trip to the capital city - Hanoi, their shyness and lack of confidence made many of them impossible to fulfill their task of talking with five different foreigners in the morning. However, in the later trips and camps, we – lecturers were very proud when they were more confident communicators who actively interacted and monitored the conversations. In other events, I could feel their self-confidence and self-esteem when they stood in front of the hundreds of other students and teachers to present about their future jobs

Day for orphan children, Culture Festival for students of ethnic minority boarding secondary school, etc. Such experiences have remarkably sharpened their individuals' professional skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy, team building, leadership, communication, presentation, debate, organization, time management, etc. which have turned them into global citizens who can be successful in high demand working environments.

Ms. An Duc Nguyen, Lecturer of English, Tay Bac University , Brunei-US. 2014, Tesol Exchange 2017, E-teacher 2017 & 2020, Access Teacher





Our Access Story



"My name is Hieu. I was born on November 21st, 2001. I'm from Vietnam. I live in Nha Trang city with my parents.

I joined the Access program 2 years ago and I am very happy to be part of the Access program. I did a lot of activities in the Access program like

talking with friends from Canada, USA, Australia..., picking up trash on Nha Trang beach and interviewing people on Earth Day,...etc. But the most memorable experience that I had with

the Access class was the trip to Hue city. We visited many interesting and beautiful places such as: Thien Mu Pagoda, Hue citadel ,... and so on . We tried lots of Hue foods and it was very delicious. Oh! And we also watched the World Cup Final together in my hotel room. It was super fun . Everyone screamed when the football player scored. The worst thing I had in Access class was doing the English tests because I didn't do all tests well and I always got bad marks.

After all , the Access program helps me a lot in communication skill , studying English and being confident. In the future, I want to have a good job and I want to help everyone who is in trouble."

Bui Vi Hieu



My name's Linh Chi. I'm from Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa. I live in a lovely house with my parents and my brother.

I joined the Access program in September, 2017. When I was 16, I decided to participate in this program with a view to making some friends,

learning English or for something new. When I first met all of members in the Access class, I can't remember anyone's name in this class. We made a circle and played a game called "Remember Names". I'm the first one to start just as I can't remember any names. What make me remember the most about

the first day is everyone is so cute and I talked too much :>>. The most interesting experience I had with the Access class was the trip to Hue. We just walked and went sightseeing all the beautiful places in Hue. I still remembered that when we were eating street foods, suddenly the weather started to rain heavily. It was so funny that everyone was still eating while holding the umbrellas.

Thanks to this Access class, I am more confident now. I know the way to present a project, I know how to solve a problem and leaving English effectively. In the future, I want to become a business woman and I hope that all the knowledge that I learnt in the Access program will help me to achieve my dream.

Hoang Nguyen Linh Chi





"My name is Cat. I'm from Nha Trang city, Khanh Hoa province. I was born in 2002. I live with my mother.

I joined the Access program from the beginning. I don't remember much about the first day in the class. I didn't know anyone at first so I was nervous, scared and anxious. I met lots of students but I

didn't know much about them then. It wasn't until a few months later, I started to get along with my new classmates. The most interesting experience I had was the time when we went to Hue. By that time, all of us had known each other for about a year. We studied, played games and visited many magnificent and historical places. It was really fun. The worst experience was the first day. Like I said, I didn't know everyone. Everything was so strange. It was nervewracking and stressful. It took a little time for me to get more comfortable.

Thanks to Access, I am more confident. We have to do a lot of presentations so I can speak English fluently and become more active in learning. I don't have any apparent plans for the future but I hope I could learn more and put my English skill to good use."

Le Nguyet Cat



I know the Access Program thanks to my aunt who has a friend working at NTU. On the first day in the class, a strange feeling came to me when I realized I was one of the oldest students, and I thought I wouldn't learn anything from those "Little kids".

After 2 years in the Access class, now I can see how

fool I was, some of them are much better than me. They make me realize that I'm not as good as I'm supposed to be at my age. Thanks to Ms Ngan, I have a big motivation to spend 2 hours a week on my motorbike. She shows me what a true teacher

and a true class is. I'll never forget when she gave me the word "commitment" Commitment means dedicating yourself to something and not caring what you will receive after that. I always see her commitment when she's with us and I decided to make commitment, too. She taught me that everything we're doing today will lead to an important event in the future. Now I know it works!! Thanks to Access, I have a lot of chances that I never think I can have. I also met a lot of people from different countries like America, Australia, Canada, Sri Lanka, Kenya,...

I'm also thankful to meet Ms. Cuc and Ms Nhi in my life. They're both gentle. I think I'm the happiest girl in the world because I enjoy everything that life gives me.

Nguyen Thi Ngoc Quyen



About GEIST

Founded on 12 February, 2017, the foundation has been pledge bound in ensuring the overall development of the society by overcoming the long-standing problematic factors that constrained the wheel of development. GEIST is fundamentally the outcome of the laborious hard work of the state alumni. These state alumni went to the United States by taking part in exchange programs funded by the U.S. Department of State, where they acquired and gained experiences. Their main goal was to apply what they had learnt in Bangladesh. Soon, GEIST is going to be one of the largest platforms of community work by the state alumni. It is deemed as a non-profit charitable organization. Currently, GEIST is functional in many countries other than Bangladesh, namely- U.S.A, India, Nepal, Vietnam, Colombia, Cambodia, Guetamala, Iraq, Ukraine, Turkey, Russia, Lithuania, Nigeria, Germany, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and France.

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