



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



## Success Stories

### Bashkortostan: Smart-school working for the future

*by John Fraser*



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“I believe that understanding one’s rights is one of the fundamental features of a civilized man and I want to be a lawyer in order to defend those rights”, says 14-year-old Murad Tuvalbaev of the UNESCO Associated School 39, Ufa, Bashkortostan, in the Russian Federation. Murad is highly involved: he is a good scholar, a member of the Bashkortostan Children’s Public Law Chamber, president of the school’s Avanta club, as well as being something of a star at the children’s theatre studio. Murad understands that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is a key tool to discovering other cultures and, perhaps more importantly, to getting to know how to live with and relate to those cultures. “He will make a good leader”, comments Ms Asiya Akhmetova, School Coordinator of the UNESCO IITE-ASPnet Pilot Project, Learning for the Future (LFF).

Murad also realizes, as does the school, that environmental sustainability is not just about planting trees, developing sustainable resources – and other similar schemes, however important they may be – but is also about people and, in particular, about understanding different cultures and the environments in which such cultures flourish. Sustainability is a product of people and their relationships. A message without a messenger is indeed limited!

The LFF Pilot Project was initiated by UNESCO’s Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE), launched in 2012. This project currently unites 42 UNESCO Associated Schools (ASPnet schools) in 14 countries. The objective of LFF is to achieve the following three main targets:

(1) To enable teachers and students to better understand the transformation of societies due to the impact of ICT and future trends to be expected in this field;

(2) To ensure an integrated and increasingly effective use of ICT in strengthening the 'four pillars' of learning for the 21st Century, within the overall school environment:

- Learning how to know
- Learning how to do
- Learning how to be
- Learning to live together.

(3) To develop new educational approaches and to experiment with, and develop, new learning materials that make effective use of ICT to support a sustainable future and a concept of 'new humanism'.

The overall aim is to fully integrate modern ICT into the educational process, to renew pedagogy and to enhance the learning experience, both now and in a sustainable future. The LFF provides an effective and practical model for the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation of UNESCO global networks based on the use of ICT. This is, of course, dependent on the innovation and the creativity of students, teachers, parents and their social partners from both public and private sectors. The LFF participants have implemented various joint projects in the school focused on the above three areas of ICT. The aim being to improve the quality of education, develop and enhance ICT in education for sustainable development, and to integrate ICT and new humanism.

The Russian Federation is represented in the LFF by three of its many ASPnet schools. There is one from Kazan (Tatarstan), one from Moscow, and the Ufa School 39 (Bashkortostan), the latter being one of the most active of the LFF participants.

At the Ufa School 39, the whole world is full of other cultures to be learned about, understood, appreciated and enjoyed. Most importantly, it is a school that shares ideas on a worldwide basis. The school has been involved in many practical projects such as, for example, participating in the International Year of Diversity in Japan, the International Tree planting Day, the Earth Day Celebration in 2011, where it took first place in the international rating of the event. Perhaps most significantly, the school was part of the World Cultural and National Heritage event, which is particularly relevant in relation to oil production areas. However, the school goes beyond participating. What really stands out is its ability to share and communicate such concepts not only in Russia, but throughout the world.

And what is the key to this success? ICT of course!

Since 2002, Ufa School 39 has participated in several ASPnet projects. The school became a UNESCO Associated School in 2008, its first partners being the Baku European Lyceum in Azerbaijan and the Kiev Gymnasium 176 in Ukraine. Both of these schools are LFF participants today. In a surprisingly short time, once initial contact had been made, a visit to Kiev was arranged allowing pupils from the two schools to spend their 2013 spring vacation together. "We had a football match and turned our virtual friendship into a real one", says Murad. "We are friends despite any obstacles."

The school already had a strong teaching and learning tradition so it comes as no surprise to find that it was a pioneer in active ICT application and taking it very seriously. Students' homework is emailed while parents are encouraged to make use of an Electronic Record Book. The school website is the winner of both the Volga regional Education and Science competition and the Best Educational Site competition. And they do not rest on their laurels. The school always seeks improvement. "We

want to write history ourselves,” says Ms Asiya Akhmetova. “On our website students can place their research and presentations and teachers share their ideas and methodology.”

The highly intensive use of ICT develops children’s tolerance and respect for different cultures, traditions and societies and enables concepts of a sustainable future to be exchanged and developed, something of great importance for a small Bashkir nationality within a large federation. Website and Skype videoconferences immerse students in cultural exchange and social activity while the Web Designer and Photoshop Club develop their technical skills and creativity.

In 2013 the school won the Bashkortostan Educational Forum ‘e-School’ title. Ufa School 39 also shares its best practices in ICT education with other schools through international conferences, seminars and forums. In 2009 as part of the project We are so different but we are together, student exchange programs were arranged with German schools, including computer presentations and wall newspapers. At one point 500 students from seven German and Bashkortostan schools created a rainbow flash mob within the Goethe Institute Grant project.

Through LFF and other means, Ufa School 39 proudly extends contact all over the world. As part of the project Generation XXI in the Dialogue on European Cultures – and based on an idea from Kiev ASPnet school 176, which organized Cervantes non-stop online recitals – the Avanta club launched their own project. Their vision was to unite no less than 44 ASPnet member schools from 14 countries in an online recital of the Ural-Batyr folk saga, featured on the UNESCO World Heritage Provisional List. Sixteen schools from six countries took part in a four-hour performance, each reciting in their own language a chapter of their own translation. Adding even more variety, 11-year-old Alice Gareeva decided to recite her version in Chinese: “It’s great to communicate online to school children of other countries and to find they are like us, the same joys and problems, similar school programmes and great teachers!”

“Living in a multinational and multiconfessional republic, I obviously understand the importance of equal access to quality education by means of ICT despite their sex, language or religion”, says Aisylyu Sahieva, school student and head of the Children’s Public Law Chamber in Ufa.

Ufa School 39 clearly demonstrates how to make the best use of ICT-based learning and networking in support of, and to develop, a sustainable future. The schools teachers and, critically, its pupils go beyond being just a school in Bashkortostan. They even go beyond being a school in Russia.

In brief, Ufa School 39, its pupils and staff are indeed a smart school – not just as part of the world today, but of a sustainable future tomorrow.

#### **Further information:**

<http://lff.iite.unesco.org/eng/home.aspx>

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As lead agency for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), UNESCO promotes an education that allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future.

Education for Sustainable Development means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; for example, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption. It also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behaviour and take action for sustainable development.

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