

## Agents of change in rural education: yearly progress report of 24 HUB-schools



**July 12, 2017, Kyiv, Ukraine** – 24 HUB-schools from all regions of Ukraine presented the interim work results on new development strategies that were framed and launched in the academic year 2016-2017. During the first year the schools introduced mixed learning, started to raise extra funds on a project basis, and increased the students and parents' involvement in school management and lesson planning. These were the results of their participation in the "Pilot 24" project, which was set in motion by Western NIS Enterprise Fund and Center for Innovative Education "Pro.Svit".

The results of the "Pilot 24" project participants' survey showed that more than 90% of teachers who had undergone the project training, view the student as a partner in the educational process. To improve the lessons, more than 95% of teachers started to use the students' feedback on a permanent or incidental basis. Upon that all schools began to apply mixed learning: lessons that combine various practices, including those of different subjects, alongside with the teacher team participation. Some schools have also started to involve parents in teaching, organize workshops for students, and have invited foreign volunteers to teach English.

*"I was amazed to see how simple steps towards the students showed incredible results. Three weeks ago the kids told me that during this academic year they could really feel both: their own importance along with the importance of their thoughts. In fact, it is the main goal of our school work: we work neither for papers, nor for bosses or teachers, but for children. Today we talk a lot about critical thinking. I always tell the kids: if you don't like something in the lesson, you should speak out, but with no insults or humiliation. If you are silent – you will not be heard", - said **Natalia Samochko**, Principal of Bilshivtsi secondary school, Ivano-Frankivsk region.*

Most principals note that at the start of the project their schools faced typical financial problems, common to most of schools: the need for winterization and renovation, lack of computers and Internet,

and the like. But after undergoing project management training, they were able to solve them by raising additional funds.

*"In our school we have the project "Kinderlandia". The specific nature of the school is that children are brought from the near-by villages. The lower grades have only 4-5 lessons and the shuttle bus departs only after the 7<sup>th</sup> lesson. So we decided to create a space where a child can run and play. There is a soft flooring, frameless furniture and games there. If we take the kids home after classes and then immediately settle them down to homework, they'll be simply exhausted. In the coming year we're going to apply the same project method to finish up the window replacement and winterization, to create groups on critical thinking and mixed learning, to rearrange the permanent exhibition of our school museum,"* - said **Anatolii Kotenko**, Principal of Oleksiivka secondary school, Zaporizhzhia region. The project "Kinderlandia" was partially funded by the rural community, the rest was raised on the GoFundEd crowdfunding platform.

Strategies that have been developed and implemented by schools include transformation in various aspects of their activities: the use of modern school management approaches, the transformation of the teaching staff into a team of fellow-thinkers, and most importantly – re-forming of the educational process in favor of the student's interests.

*"The reform of secondary education should focus on a student. Properly drawn strategy will help to ensure a qualitatively new level of learning, being centered not only on the transfer of knowledge, but also on the development of practical skills, critical thinking, and ability to solve problems. Neighboring countries have already undergone such transformations, and they were quite successful. And these first 24 HUB-schools that we selected for the pilot project have shown that despite the limited funding it is possible to achieve significant results in the school development and affect our educational reform in its entirety,"* - said **Iryna Ozymok**, Local Economic Development Program Manager of Western NIS Enterprise Fund.

Western NIS Enterprise Fund is the founder of the "Pilot 24" project, which additionally bankrolled about 6.3 million UAH to ensure school infrastructure development. Also, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) allocated \$1.5 million for the renovation of 24 HUB-schools.

The "Pilot 24" project aims to bring together the HUB-school administration and teachers in order to develop new forms of interaction between a teacher and students, a principal and teachers, a school and community. There have been four three-day modules since the project launch, which encompassed various aspects of the learning process. During the academic year 2016-2017, each school, involved in the project, worked with a mentor in order to thoroughly change the quality of education. Meanwhile the principals got trained in management and team building. The teachers completed the training modules on contemporary teaching methods and orientation on the students' interests, where they got acquainted with the lesson formats that were practical and interesting for kids, and had an opportunity to study child psychology, emotional intelligence, and the advantages of mixed learning. The schools now proceed with implementing the development plans that were framed together with mentors within the course of the program.

**Western NIS Enterprise Fund (WNISEF)** is a \$150 million regional fund, a pioneer in Ukraine and Moldova with more than two decades of successful experience in investing in small and medium-sized companies. WNISEF was funded by the U.S. government via the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Since its inception, WNISEF's cumulative investments total over \$168 million to 118 companies employing around 25 000 people and made it possible to unlock \$1.5 billion for companies in Ukraine and Moldova. In 2015 WNISEF has launched a \$35 million legacy program focused on export promotion, local economic development, impact investing and economic leadership. WNISEF is funding innovative, high-impact, reform focused programs aimed to transform lives of the ordinary people in Ukraine and Moldova. [www.wnisef.org](http://www.wnisef.org)