

FDR's Donation of Software Makes the Leap Seem Like a Guided Step

As a Junior High teacher in the states I gave the use of technology as a teaching tool the virtual cold shoulder. It wasn't until my fourth year of teaching that a friend sat me down and took time to show me how easy it was to incorporate technology into my style of teaching. A whole world of creative lesson plans and interactive classes opened up to me. My students and I benefited greatly over the years that followed, to the point that I couldn't imagine how I functioned before in my technology dark ages.



Peace Corps Volunteer Steve Przymus instructs Dominican students on computer use.

That is why, as an Information Technology (IT) Volunteer serving in the Peace Corps Dominican Republic, I understand the challenge we have of helping Dominican teachers overcome their fear of technology, their inhibition to incorporate it in their teaching, and the feeling that all of this seems like a leap of faith into the unknown and uncomfortable. After passing through the metal gate of any liceo or básica school in the DR it becomes immediately apparent the importance of what technology can offer and the opportunities we have to make a meaningful and sustainable impact in the education system and future of this country. There are often no books, no walls decorated with maps and inviting didactic

materials to absorb, and the predominate teaching practice is the single sense method of writing information on the board to be copied.

So how do we make this leap seem close enough to the ground to take the jump? The recent donation from the Friends of the Dominican Republic of educational software has helped greatly to motivate the teachers, the students and may I say the PCDR IT volunteers. In Esperanza, I have the good fortune of having Internet in my lab, but the majority of volunteer sites do not. This has been a huge challenge for IT volunteers. With the new software we are now able to lure teachers to bring classes to the labs, help them learn how to type (Typing Master), and with a guided hand motivate them to echar pa'lante education in this beautiful country. Since installing "TypingMaster Pro" on all of the computers, within two weeks nine teachers and countless students have started the "complete course" program.



Using computers means learning to type with this Spanish language TypingMaster Pro software donated for use in 80 schools by Typing Master Finland through the Friends of the Dominican Republic.

The picture below shows a teacher and one of her students, from the deaf school "Divino Niño" of Esperanza, playing a math game from an educational CDROM. I plan to use the

software for teaching reading to put on a camp this summer with teachers and their students who are behind in reading or cannot read.



The opportunities to involve and motivate are many. Sometimes we just need a pocket full of mentas (thanks Neil Ross) and a friend to sit down with us and take the time to help. Thanks Friends of the Dominican Republic for your donation and support of our projects.

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Additional photos of Peace Corps DR IT projects provided by Volunteer Tanya Nahman, 2004, tnahman@do.peacecorps.gov.



Three Dominican students use computers for the first time in Peace Corps Volunteer Roderick “Tico” Cross’s information technology class in the El Limón public school, near San José de Ocoa. Dominican Republic.



Dominican student using educational mathematics game software donated by the Friends of the Dominican Republic, 2004.

Photographs taken by Neil Ross at Esperanza's school, Dominican Republic, February 2004



Peace Corps Volunteer Steve Przymus instructs Dominican students on use of computers. The intensity of their interest and joy at actually using a computer clearly shows on each boy's face.



Peace Corps Volunteer Przymus and Dominican secondary class teacher share a happy moment as two students successfully use a mouse while playing an educational mathematics game in the school computer laboratory, Esperanze, Dominican Republic.



Dominican teacher, herself taught how to use computers by the Peace Corps Volunteer, guides her students into the world of information technology in a small town in northern Dominican Republic. A male teacher (top left row) uses his free period to search the Internet for information to teach his class. The expectation is that when the American volunteer leaves this school, the Dominican teachers will have mastered enough skills to continue computer classes for their students.