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schoolbird Strengthens U.S. Ties in Vietnam Through Education ^[1]

The world remains a complicated place. Tensions are high, and global communities are evolving at a rapid pace. In some ways, technology has brought the world closer together, while others may argue that humans are lonelier than ever. Public diplomacy is a crucial part of the global ecosystem; however, it is no longer enough for a handful of people to control that sector. Diplomacy stemming from the education system, specifically within the classroom, is an untapped incubator full of potential. That is where schoolbird, an educational platform that connects Americans to teach internationally in Vietnam, is looking to create intentional opportunities for cultural intersection and collaboration within the context of the classroom.

schoolbird is a purpose-driven company that believes passionately in the power of education to change perspectives, lives and, ultimately, the world. The company targets (though is not limited to) new graduates who are looking to make a forever investment in the lives of students and undertake the experience of a lifetime by teaching in Vietnam. Why target this demographic? Great question. New college grads are able to look at their post-grad life as a blank canvas. Goals, dreams and aspirations flood their minds. However, many of those things require steps to get there. schoolbird offers opportunities for new grads to:

- Form global connections
- Integrate themselves into a new culture
- Teach students English
- Expose students to American etiquette and culture
- Potential internship opportunities and career opportunities
- Make money/achieve financial goals
- Travel, explore, and form community

By starting their post-grad journey through joining the schoolbird family, students widen their horizons to the entire globe rather than restrict themselves to one context. Through this social and economic integration and partnership, we can advance the mission for U.S. public diplomacy organically by creating connections and communities through the context of education.

If we as a group can continue to create opportunities and platforms for young people to make a contribution and investment on a global scale, what might public diplomacy look like ten years from now?

Currently, Vietnam ranks 31 out of 72 countries in terms of English language proficiency. The Ministry of Education and Training tries to emphasize the development of practical communication skills. However, this is rarely found in the classrooms throughout Vietnam. schoolbird is excited to come alongside the Ministry of Education and provide a tangible solution that can yield immediate impact on each Vietnamese student. As of right now, there is an immense shortage of English teachers who are native English speakers, a lack of relationship-building for teachers who are already on the ground in Vietnam, and little to no incentive for them to stay or form long-term career connections. schoolbird provides support throughout the entire teacher experience, from the moment they apply to the second they return to the United States. By thoroughly vetting and supporting these teachers, we are able to solve the systemic issue that Vietnam faces and increase the quality of public education in Vietnam.



schoolbird Classroom photo by Kayla McCord

Logistically, the average schoolbird experience will be a nine-month commitment, where a student will be placed as a teacher in a public school in Vietnam. To be qualified for the program, each schoolbird teacher needs to be a native English speaker in addition to having a bachelor's degree. A TESOL certification is also required; however, an applicant does not need to have that in order to apply (schoolbird will help them obtain this certification). Training and orientations will occur where each teacher will be equipped with everything they need to know about Vietnam, their school and all personal logistics. Services such as housing, financial planning, transportation, healthcare, activity planning, travel and a resource for all needs/questions will be accessible as well. schoolbird's goal is to take care of everything that

a teacher would possibly need and want and prepare them to have the most incredible experience possible, allowing them to enjoy and fully invest in their students and the community they will be in.

If we as a group can continue to create opportunities and platforms for young people to make a contribution and investment on a global scale, what might public diplomacy look like ten years from now? If we want to see change and an increase in peace and collaboration across our global community, action needs to be taken. The exchange of language heavily relies on a human-to-human interaction. By giving new grads the opportunity to teach in Vietnam, we are setting the stage for thousands of face-to-face interactions to happen daily. The gift of language then transcends into a connection and understanding that has the potential to form a lifelong bond, which then benefits our international economy, global peace and cultural awareness. For the American, their salary pales in comparison to the immense impact that is possible through the schoolbird opportunity.

Public diplomacy can take various forms and, as Americans, we need to expand our worldviews to make lasting and impactful change. The cross-pollination of language, culture and community has an unprecedented value that has yet to be fully utilized. schoolbird is excited to join together with the leaders of tomorrow and give them an experience that will forever shape their thinking and worldview.
