



Engaging Technology:

Providing Pohnpeian Children
the Tools to Achieve

[December 2011]

Introduction

The children on the island of Pohnpei in the Federated States of Micronesia are not being equipped with the basic tools necessary for them to achieve in the future. Class sizes are too large, teachers are not prepared, reading books are found few and far between, and there is a lack of leadership at the administrative level. As a result, students on the whole are far behind in their English proficiency and are destined for a future of remedial education. MAHI International is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization based on the island of Pohnpei is currently working to improve the education system here with our project entitled “Professional Growth for Educators with Emphasis on ESL and Reading.” We have adopted five public elementary schools with the central goal to improve reading proficiency for students in grades 6, 7 and 8. Since the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year we have conducted a workshop with all of the principals in Pohnpei Public Schools, evaluated all of the teachers and principals in our adopted schools, and assessed the instructional reading level of 560 students. Our full report from these evaluations and assessments can be found in the attached document.

This proposal is seeking to fill a fundamental need in our program to address the deficiencies we found in the schools. We are soliciting to acquire 50 iPad tablet computers and English learning software. Our program will consist of visiting each of our adopted schools once a week, teaching a lesson, and using the iPads which will contain material related for the day’s lesson. We believe this new technology will engage the students, be a fantastic educational tool, and make a tremendous difference in increasing their reading proficiency.

About Pohnpei

Pohnpei is a mountainous, Pacific island located seven degrees north of the equator in the Western Pacific. One of the wettest places on earth, Pohnpei receives an annual recorded rainfall in excess of 400 inches. The total population is just below 36,000 people and is broken up into five municipalities: Nett, U, Madolenihmw, Kitti, and Sokehs. The schools we have adopted are spread across the municipalities of Sokehs and Madolenihmw.

The Need

Throughout the Pohnpei Public Schools, including in the five schools we have adopted, there are numerous problems present. Many of the schools do not have enough reading books or text books. The teachers lack motivation and the proper training, especially with teaching English. Many of the principals lack experience and the necessary resources to help their teachers. The Department of Education struggles to effectively manage the schools amidst lack of resources and personnel. Virtually all the students are being taught in Pohnpeian through the 8th grade, despite the Department of Education policy that students start learning in English beginning in 4th grade.

As a result of these problems and many others, it is of no surprise that of the 560 students in grades 6, 7 and 8, the average student is reading three grades below grade level and 37 students are reading at Kindergarten level or below. While there is no silver bullet solution to reforming the Pohnpei Public Schools, we believe our program will make a drastic impact in our adopted schools. Currently, we are in the pilot stage of our program, but hope to expand it to more schools in the future.

Our Program

We plan to visit each of our adopted schools once a week, teaching in grades 6, 7 and 8 with over half of the time we are in each class being used for the students to work with the iPads (a sample calendar is available on pages 9-10 in the attached report). One of the English learning software applications we want to install on the iPads is entitled “My Word! Readers – Are Bees Smart or What?” This is part of a series that also includes the application “Are Whales Smart or What?” to be followed up shortly with the release of “Are Squirrels Smart or What?” and “Are Dogs Smart or What?” These applications include a story each student can follow with many interactive features including the ability to touch any word in the story and hear the word pronounced correctly. There are also many games for the student to play teaching them a variety of reading skills including phonics, vocabulary and spelling.

These applications are designed by Wrinkled Pants Software led by Dr. Selma Wassermann, Professor Emerita in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. Wassermann brings her skills as a teacher, researcher, writer and educational innovator, with a strong background in developmental and remedial reading and educational technology. The description of their applications is below:

My Word! Reader is a series of unique and ground breaking literacy applications for the iPad. These apps have been designed to enable underachieving students to improve their literacy skills. The apps are self-instructional and provide teachers with a tool to help students in need, as well as freeing teachers to engage in other important instructional tasks. Although My Word! Reader applications were intended for use with students ages 8-16, they have also proved successful with emerging readers, ages 5-7.

My Word! Reader uses non-fiction stories that are sophisticated in content, but written in reader-friendly style. The stories become the medium for engaging students in a series of interactive skill-building activities to develop fluency in oral reading, sight vocabulary, word analysis and phonic skills, spelling and writing. The illustrations and animations have mature appeal and add to reader interest.

Besides these applications from My Word! Reader, we also want to add other educational applications. We have chosen the iPad as it is the only tablet computer compatible with My Word! Reader applications. In addition, the most supplementary educational applications are available on the iPad in contrast to other less developed tablet computers.

Requests

We are requesting funding to purchase the following:

Item	Quantity	Price
iPad 2 tablet computers (16 GB)	50	\$449 ¹ /each - \$22,450
“Are Bees Smart or What?” application	50	\$5/each - \$250
“Are Whales Smart or What?” application	50	\$5/each - \$250

¹ With a 10% Educational Discount

“Are Squirrels Smart or What?” application (to be released in January)	50	\$5/each - \$250
Charging of iPads ²	n/a	\$564
MacBook Pro, 13 inch	1	\$1199
iNsync iPad Charging and Synchronizing Case (holds 16 iPads each)	3	\$5458.56

TOTAL COST: \$30,421.56

Explanation of Requests

We have encountered very large class sizes where students have to share books and desks, not to mention a teacher who is clearly and understandably overwhelmed. The largest class size is 50 students and we want every student to have their own iPad throughout our program. The MacBook Pro is needed to synchronize and program the iPads and the iNsync iPad Charging and Synchronizing Case is necessary to ensure the safety of the iPads. The cases are shockproof and waterproof – the latter being a very necessary protection in the Pohnpeian climate.



Sustainability

We plan to be in our five adopted schools for the next three years to track the progress of the students to assess the full impact of our program. We will do this by frequently evaluating the student’s English proficiency. Over the course of this time we hope to add schools and if necessary seek funding for additional iPads if the program is found to be successful. These iPads will never be left at the schools – they will 100% of the time be in possession of MAHI International staff to ensure their proper care and security. MAHI International has been working in the communities of Pohnpei for the last decade and is committed to helping all the children of Pohnpei become equipped with the necessary tools to achieve in the future.

² .24 kw/hr to charge one iPad → .24 (50 iPads) = 12kw/day
12 kw (.47cents/kw) = \$5.64
\$5.64 (100 school days) = \$564