

# THE EDUCATOR'S EXTRA

Empowering Teachers | Inspiring Students | Improving Education

## ¿Cómo estás?

### Kickstarting a Dominican connection

SANTO DOMINGO, DR - The humidity immediately hits, the sun's rays far brighter than the latitudinal north's familiar climate, a mix of hand gestures and elementary words in Spanish and English exchanged, the venture into the Dominican Republic began. Weaving and winding through the congested streets of Santo Domingo and onto the recently constructed highway leading into the Cordillera Central mountain range, the Dominican Republic immediately displays its geographical significance. A country that offers stunning mountain scenery, an incredibly deep history, and inviting beaches, the Dominican Republic is a wonder of the Caribbean. And the first Spanish-speaking country with schools that are looking to become part of the Building Cultural Bridges Program.



During our explorative trip to the DR, which included visiting potential participating schools in Constanza, Jarabacoa, and Villa Hermosa (near La Romana), it became very clear that American students would be able to practice their Spanish and Dominican students would be able to practice their English with their counterpart. The Building Cultural Bridges program now can be a medium of language tutoring and practice. Learning any language can be exceedingly difficult, especially without a native speaker to communicate with. However, the potential of establishing friendships between Dominican and American students unlocks the opportunity of bilingual refinement.

## Get to Know Educators of America



**Riley Holkan**  
**Program Coordinator**

### **Favorite part about Educators of America:**

My favorite part about Educators of America is that it allows me to continue my Peace Corps service. When I left Namibia, I thought my time as a volunteer had come to an end. I thought I had to kiss a country I had come to love so dearly goodbye. Now, through my work with Educators of America, I will never have to.

### **If one animal was made the size of an elephant, which would be the scariest?**

By far the scariest animal would be a camel spider. I used to get frequent visits from them while living in Karasburg, Namibia, and even the smallest ones terrified me.

### **Pancakes or Waffles, and why?**

Waffles because there is no such thing as chicken and pancakes. Or at least I've never heard of it.

### **If everything in your house had to be one color, what color would you choose?**

I think I would choose brown. I dig different types of wood, especially in homes.

### **What's one skill you'd like to master?**

I really would love to master the skill of negotiation. You could use that skill in an unthinkable amount of situations.



The warm and inviting personality of the Dominican students and teachers is robust and assuaging - even to individuals with little to no Spanish speaking skills (aka ourselves). Yet, during our time, comprehension begins to rise and connections are made on a level that ascends over language and onto a very humanistic platform where discussions of connecting students occurred.

We look forward to continuing the conversation with our newly discovered colleagues and performing the fieldwork of setting the framework to successfully connect American and Dominican students. From the formal *¿cómo estás?* to the colloquial *qué lo qué*, the opportunities for students and ourselves to explore the language, culture, and traditions of the Dominican Republic are abundant.

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## ***Our Students are the future Agents of Change, Are We Preparing Them for that Responsibility?***

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Our students' future is constantly evolving. Are we, as educators and teachers, preparing them for the long-term and the realities that they will have to face around them in the future world?

A heavy question indeed. However, through Project-Based Learning and exposure to new technologies and industries, students begin to grasp the skills and engage with the potential defining dynamics of their world to come. In *"The Industries of the Future"*, a book by Former Senior Advisor for Innovation to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Alec Ross states:

**"The coming era of globalization is bringing forward a new change in technological, economic and social change. In the future we can look forward to seeing adaptive technology, such as robotic exosuits, which will allow paraplegics to walk, nano-technology that will combat cancer, and digital cryptocurrency which could be helpful in providing a fair market to current third world countries or used in acts of cyber terrorism."**



Students that engage and explore upcoming technologies and industries in conjunction with Project-Based Learning driving questions encourages them to make a positive impact on their communities and societies around them.

In an article on PBLWorks, K-6 STEM Educator Drew Hirshon discusses that PBL should not only be about creating something fun to teach standards or solely focused on engaging students but putting students in the position to be agents of change. Using PBL as educators, we're shifting our own mindset and the mindset of our students to forward thinking.

What can we do now that can positively impact our future? How can we improve humankind? What technologies are helpful versus hurtful? All driving questions that can be incorporated during PBL project brainstorming.

To read more about this topic, please visit: <https://www.pblworks.org/blog/future-oriented-stem-projects-make-students-agents-change>

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"Educating the mind without educating the heart in no education at all."

- Aristotle