

## Teachers

It's an honor to have the opportunity to participate in this project as it has changed our perspective on teaching and learning.

At first, it wasn't easy to give my students the autonomy to run with their own idea as we were too comfortable with the traditional role as lecturer (sometimes a *dictator*) and keeper of knowledge. Like a protective mother figure, we were constantly telling our students the dos and don'ts and readily offered solutions that we thought would be best for them. Sometimes, we felt uneasy when things were not working our way.

My colleagues and I soon realized that we had to change our role if we wanted our students to develop a stronger sense of ownership over the project. Therefore, we learned to "let go" and become their coaches. Much like a coach of a sport, the students were first taught the basics—setting realistic goals, managing budget and chairing meetings. It then came down to looking over their shoulders and helping them when they needed help. At the beginning, showing them how things were done was critical so students had a base, but the real learning came from doing.

Besides making students accountable for progress, we had to get our students off to a good start which meant "selling" the project to the students. We found it very contagious when we showed them how much we had believed in the project. We also had to pass our vision on to the students. In other words, students must believe the project is really going to work and be something special. Instead of viewing this project as another assignment, they need to see how it can initiate change, inform others about an important topic, or create connections in the community.

Most important of all, we learned that students possess more talents and greater possibilities than we realize.