

# Education in New Cairo

This April, eight high school students from the Center for Global Studies (CGS) in Norwalk, Conn., traveled to Egypt for a pioneering two-week study tour. Led by their teacher, Emad El-Digwy, and Greta Scharnweber, the MacMillan Center's PIER Director for Middle East Studies, the students were hosted by the Modern Education School (MES) in New Cairo, a sprawling suburb of the largest city in the Arab World. Housed in the homes of MES students, the CGS group spent many of their days attending school and learning about the Egyptian education system as well as Egyptian culture through firsthand experience. In addition to attending school with Egyptian peers, the students visited important cultural sites with their MES hosts, such as the pyramids, the historical Khan Al-Khalili bazaar, the Egyptian Museum, Coptic and Islamic Cairo, and the new Al-Azhar Park. The group also went on an excursion to Upper Egypt, where they visited the Aswan Dam, the Karnak and Philae Temples and the Valley of the Kings. Individual outings in Cairo with their homestay families provided a range of social and cultural activities for the students.

Community service activities also formed an important part of the program. CGS students visited the St. Andrews Refugee Ministry, where they tutored refugee children in their English lessons and learned about the issues that refugee populations face in Cairo. A site visit to the Fatma Annan public school provided an important contrast to their private school MES hosts.



Center for Global Studies students at the St. Andrew's Refugee Ministry in Cairo.

The study tour marks the culmination of a two-year effort in Middle East Studies on behalf of CGS, a global studies magnet affiliated with Brien McMahon High School. In consultation with PIER-Middle East Studies, CGS has rolled out a full-time Middle East Studies track that trains students in two levels of Arabic (with Arabic III to start in Fall 2008). It also offers a Middle East history course and integrates Arabic literature into the world literature curriculum. CGS plans to offer a two-week study tour for its Arabic students every spring, mirroring their successful East Asian programs in Chinese and Japanese.



Students in "morning lines" at the Modern Education School in Cairo.