

Teacher of Kazakhstan
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Rule of law begins at school

Outline of the article

“We learn to govern” – that is the slogan of the civic education project, Student Local Government (SLG) Day, conducted jointly by IFES and Ministry of Education and Science of RK. This project allowed students to obtain hands-on experience on the workings of the local government, and to observe the local executive body (akimat) functioning for one full day. Based on their future occupation preferences, students were assigned to different departments of akimats, and were engaged in the daily work processes. Departments they visited included (but were not limited to) the Economic & Budgetary Planning Department, the Culture and Language Development Department and the Legal and Internal Affairs Department.

Upon arrival, students received detailed information and explanations of the akimats’ objectives and principles of work, and then became “akimat employees” for the day, taking full part in the daily work of their assigned departments. At the end of the day, students came together shared what they learned and what impressions they had after working a day in the akimat. Many of them were excited to have such a great opportunity to directly participate in the local government structure. They reported acquiring interesting knowledge about various questions, such as, what kind of support veterans of the Great Patriotic War receive, what benefits and special payments mothers with many children receive, how water supply is organized in their rayon and who is responsible for the garbage collection. Many students expressed their new realization that the akimats’ role is underestimated, and that the general public not realize what important work civil servants do. The SLG Day was an eye opening experience for the students and has provided them with a new awareness about state policy. In addition, much of the student feedback indicated that their experience at the akimat has impacted their future career choices.

Suseeva Darya (form 9 “B”, school #14, Atyrau city): At first I was afraid of taking such a big responsibility, but fear vanished when all of the participants were gathered at the greeting hall of the city akimat. The atmosphere was quite friendly and warm. We met with all akimat officers and then began the SLG Day. I was assigned to the General Department of the akimat. The head of the department kindly invited us to visit her room and introduced us to the department staff; we were under her full care and guidance. As an “akimat employee” I worked in the secretary office. At the first glance, it seemed that working in secretary office would be boring and useless. I soon learned how wrong I was. The secretary office has a crucial role and is practically applicable. First of all, it serves as a supportive body to all other branches of the akimat by providing technical and practical assistance. Second, the secretary office is responsible for taking visitors and processing complaints from citizens, which is extremely important for the local community and ordinary people. Working in this office, I dealt with document supplies, records and informational support to the akim. I received great insider knowledge about the office paperwork, office management and clerical duties to be carried out by the akimat. Now I know that if I encounter any problems, I will go to the secretary office first, and that undoubtedly, I will receive any assistance I need to handle my situation because people who working there are conscientious, kind and very nice. In addition to my experience in the secretary office, I was allowed to visit all the other akimat departments and to observe their functioning. At the end of the day, we were brought together to share our impressions and discuss our suggestions for improvement. Finally, we were given certificates and took pictures of this wonderful event, which will remain memorable long after its occurrence.