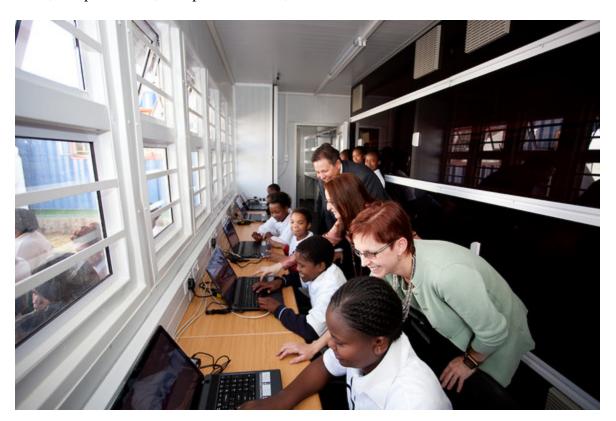# Shipping Container Computer Labs Connect Kids With Mentors Around The World

These solar-shaded computer centers are designed to help kids in the developing world have access to mentors halfway around the planet.

Shipping containers have become popular sites for repurposing in recent years--we've seen shipping container homes, gardens, even portable pizza shops. Architecture and design firm Perkins+Will is taking a different tack by turning 40-foot shipping containers into learning laboratories in South Africa.

The LaunchPad computer labs, created in partnership with U.S. nonprofit Infinite Family, are intended to connect local kids with mentors around the world. Mentors talk weekly with South African kids affected by HIV/AIDs and poverty via computer to help them improve English skills, computer skills, interpersonal skills, and more.

The labs come with a slew of sustainable features: solar-shaded roof canopies that keep the interior temperature comfortable, a wall of recycled bottles (also to moderate temperatures), windows placed for optimum access to sun and breezes for natural light and ventilation, and battery-powered storage banks that keep the power on during extreme weather events. The labs also feature laptops instead of desktops--the former uses less power and doesn't create as much heat.

The first LaunchPad lab opened in August in Alexandria; Infinite Family plans to open 100 more in the next five years in South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Check out Infinite Family's video mentorship program [here](#).