

Turkmen Schools to Teach President's Works

By [The Moscow Times](#)

January 15, 2014

The  **Moscow Times**

Some classrooms around the world have a picture of the country's leader hanging on the wall. The education of children in Turkmenistan will have a particularly presidential focus, however, as schools will be required to teach the works of President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov.

The life and work of Berdymukhamedov, who came to power after former president Saparmurat Niyazov died of a heart attack in 2006, will be taught from the fourth grade onward, the Turkmenistan Chronicle reported Tuesday.

Berdymukhamedov has authored numerous books, including biographies of his relatives, a book about horses and "Living Legend," about Turkmen carpets.

Berdymukhamedov's books, as well as books and poems written about him, will be studied for up to 10 hours each quarter, in addition to the two to three hours given to study of Niyazov.

The eccentric Niyazov, who banned opera and ordered citizens to extract all their gold teeth, had mandated that schoolchildren study his works and spiritual guide for 25 to 30 hours per quarter, a number that has gradually been reduced since his death.

Turkmenistan, a country of about 5.5 million people, held its first multi-party parliamentary election late last year, though all parties are loyal to Berdymukhamedov. It is routinely ranked as one of the most repressive countries in the world.

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