

Thursday 25 August:

Guatemala City

**Preliminary exploration of resources in Guatemala City**

Ministerio de Educaci-n  
Direccion General de Educaci-n Bilingue Intercultural  
220-3376 ( 2 c 6-51 Zone 2)  
ComitŽ Nacional de Alfabetizaci-n  
331-1826 (6av. 3 -11, Zone 4)  
Sistema Nacional de Mejoramiento de los Recursos Humanos y Curricular  
232-7007 ( 2 c 6-51 Zone 2)

The above places were impossible to find at this time on foot or by cab.

**Book Stores**

Alfa-Beta Editores  
Alfa Beta, Sociedad An-nima  
7a. Avenida 4-51, Zona 1 (two blocks north of the Cathedral)  
E-mail: sibi4@hotmail.com  
Has many text books, is oriented towards education, credit cards not accepted.

Sophos S.A.  
Av. Reforma 13-89, Zona 10 (in El Portal, 5 blocks south of US Embassy)  
High end educational trade books, adult as well as pre-school

Very valuable Spanish language publishing companies with editions in these stores:

Editorial Saqil Tzi (Educaci-n Sin Fronteras)  
Km. 15 Carretera Roosevelt, Zone 7 Mixco, Guatemala

This company prints a wide range of paperback (Q 100) adult education and social justice books, bilingual Spanish and Kakchiquel. They are in editorial partnership with Escuela Superior de Education Integral Rural -ESEDIR - Mayab' Saqarib'al. We bought a number of these books to give to Saul and Ronaldo at this first visit.

Editorial Piedra Santa [piedrasanta@guate.net](mailto:piedrasanta@guate.net)

A wonderful selection of illustrated children's books on science, environmental studies and stories, particularly well illustrated stories by Miguel ęngel Asturias.

Cholsamaj cholsamaj@micro.com.gt www.cholsamaj.org

Editorial Zumen, Buenos Aires magisterio@commet.com.ar

Editorial Juventud, Barcelona www.editorialjuventud.com

**Observation:** Very fine books are easily found in Guatemala City. However, they are very expensive. But illustrated children's books from Barcelona and Buenos Aires often have corporate financing or UNICEF backing and are more modestly priced. Our advice is that we should make regular stops to ALFA - BETA for books for the school libraries at Labor de Falla and Cerro Alto.

Friday 26 August

Guatemala City

Through Dennis Smith we had managed to contract the services of:

Nelson Santizo

2 Av "D" 3-24 Sta Ines Petapa

6316496 Home

5065579 Cell

\$160.00 + lunch and parking

Mr. Santizo served as translator and driver with cell phone. With his help we were able to get to the ministry offices we had been unable to find on Thursday. The imperative key to addresses in the city is understanding of the zones. Often street numbers do not extend from zone to zone but begin again in a different order. But the little that Nelson did not know he knew how to find out.

10:00 - 11:30

Direccion General de Educaci-n Bilingue Intercultural

2 Calle 6 -51 Zone 2

Raxche« Demetrio Rodriquez Guajan (Director General)

e-mail: direcebi@terra.com.gt

Specific question and issue: What role does bilingual education play in the current program for education reform?

A. There is a major need for teachers who can teach in two languages, particularly with Spanish as a second language. The indigenous language or home language of the students will be recognized and respected as the primary or first language.

1. 35% of children in pre-school and secondary grades are indigenous. 20% of teachers are indigenous but are not trained to teach bilingual courses, even in their own languages.
2. There are now 13 schools for bilingual teacher training at elementary levels in seven languages.
3. New text books in (21) native languages have been created and are available for studies in math, ethnography, and culture.
4. There is still a major disparity in the success ratio between Ladino & Mayan students  
of 100 students graduating with Basico - 12 are Mayan  
of 100 students graduating from Univ. - 3 are Mayan  
although 50% of students attending school are Mayan, only 12% graduate.

B. The MINEDUC Reforma Educativa program now demands that all teachers, old and new, become "partners in learning multiculturalism with their students." Students attend school four days a week; their teachers must spend one day a week for further professional training.

C. The focus is not only on the process of teaching but also on contents of curriculum which is now to include backgrounds of culture and ethnicity. This focus on indigenous culture not only builds self esteem of students, but it strengthens the connection with parents and grandparents. These elder generations have traditionally regarded public education as something apart from them and of an other world, (the world of the conquistidor). Now they will realize they have a connection with what their children are learning in school and consequently will be more supportive. This will cut down absenteeism and in ideal cases give opportunity for older adults to contribute to the learning experience by sharing their cultural wisdom and traditions.

D. Education in the USA is actually "mono-cultural." Although there are many nationalities involved, most have a European orientation.

E. Bilingual textbooks are (will be) free to all students. They will eventually be available in 21 languages.

**Observations:** Director General Raxche« Guajan implied that to find funding for the study and preservation of the indigenous languages is one of his major objectives.

He also expressed disappointment in the lack of government support and understanding in what he was trying to do. This was curious because he seemed to have a great deal of support. He had the textbooks, the programs, great documents of policy and pronouncements. However we soon realized that although he was a good man with a noble mission, at any time the military could convince the politicians to give them the money designated for education. And he would be only a man with a desk.

1. He was very anxious to show us examples of his program's bilingual text books and generously gave us a complete set for primary grades, which we passed on to Saul and Rolando.
2. It seems that the bilingual education initiative is principally in the early grades, with the assumption being that many students entering school speak an indigenous language as their home language. However, in many urban areas this is not often the case. Although parents and grandparents may speak a Mayan language, the children mostly want to and do speak Spanish. Learning to read and write their "home" language is very difficult and not awfully popular.

But also:

3. The textbooks we were given were not truly bilingual. The primary mathbook is written only in Kakchiquel and not in Kakchiquel and Spanish. This causes resentment among students who are only nominally Mayan or Ladino.

Dir. Gen. Raxche« Guajan, a Kakchiquel and fully committed to bilingual education, was extremely proud of his program. He was not only generous with his books, but was very generous with his time. He was like the other individuals we met at MINEDUC. They have a vision of a better Guatemala. But it seems that their strength can come only from local and grassroots support. And this is difficult to get, since on the local levels there is such distrust for the government. When we asked how we can help his program, he asked us to encourage our people in Chimaltenango to take advantage of it, to contact:

Gloria Batzin, Head of Bilingual Education in Chimaltenango (839-1176)

12: 00 - 1:00 p.m.                    Ministerio de Educacion  
Direcci-n de Calidad y Desarrollo Educativo    Nivel-Infantile  
Avenida Reforma 1-50, Zona 9                    (334-5584)

This meeting was with three women who administered the program of preschool education (10 months - 6 yrs). They have two basic divisions: 0 through 3 years and 4 through 6 years. They organize, train staff and give support to preschool

learning centers through out the country. but they spoke most enthusiastically about their workshops to help parents to teach their children. We were shown teaching materials which were colorful, dynamic and challenging ( and must have been expensive to produce.)

They also gave us materials which we left with Ronaldo and Saul. They also said if "we" had a group, a parents group in Chimaltenango, they would be happy to visit with them and help them take advantage of DICADE by showing them how to set up a preschool or "day care learning center." They could offer training and program literature.

Contact in Chimaltenango: Emildo Gordillo 839-1176.

**Observation:** Once again we were impressed with how these women really believed in what they were doing. Perhaps their program is a dream that has plenty of enthusiasm and simply not enough money. However, it was encouraging to see such commitment.

1. In the conversations with the women for infant education, we got an understanding that, yes, these programs are there, but the people who want them must show they are in earnest. They must demonstrate that they really want them and that they will tenaciously try to get them. The local people should find a location where they want to have an early learning center, come up with parent support and adults willing to give time to the program, and then the Ministry of Education will give resources and training to help the parents have their program.

2. There seems to be an idea that the government will not "do it" but will be partners in helping the people do it. Of course if the people do not know how to ask or they do not know what to ask for, then the Ministry does nothing. At that time the politicians say: see we told you so, these people don't want education reform, they don't want new and high minded programs. And then they give the money to the military or to each other. The idealists in the Ministry also begin to believe the people don't have the sense to take advantage of what they have developed and are trying to offer them.

**Recommendation:**

We recommend that Ronaldo and Saul establish close contacts with Emildo Gordillo (pre-school ed.) and Gloria Batzin (bilingual ed.) in Chimaltenango. When our people in the Kakchiquel Presbytery show interest and make requests for MINEDUC resources, this gives the kind of support these people we visited need. The more requests for the kind of program described above, the stronger the voice will be that the people do want and need this service.

The Dump is a "community" of scavengers. Their houses, made of cardboard, tin, plastic sheeting are perched precariously on the sides of a large barranco which for decades has served as a major dumping ground for Guatemala City's garbage and trash. Many of the families who live here have done so for generations. Lucy had read in Prensa Libre about Hanley Denning, an American who runs a program for elementary education, literacy and afterschool tutoring.

Although we were unable to find Hanley Denning, we did visit an afterschool tutoring center and clinic known as Potte's House ([www.pottershouse.org.GT](http://www.pottershouse.org.GT)).

Potte's House Association gives students assistance with school supplies, a place to study with tutoring for elementary school children, a small reference library and reading room. They also offer extension courses for adolescents and

adults, adult basic literacy and education of elementary school equivalency, scholarships for advanced study in private schools and college, and skills training.

Potte's House uses many of the resources from the Ministry of Education but have also built their own academic program and receive their funding from Enterprise Development International of Fairfax, Virginia. Their literature is specifically Christian but non-denominational.

Associated with their clinic, there is also a vigorous program of community building and family reconciliation. Their person in charge (Encargada) was Ingrid Yac. Our specific interest had been to find if a large percent of the population was Mayan. We were told that when Mayans hit bottom in Guatemala City, they usually try to get home to their villages to be with their families. The people living in Zone 3 were unique unto themselves, predominantly Ladino with no indigenous ties.

We had hoped to see some of their education programs, curriculum and objectives, but these people were extremely busy, and we were grateful for the few minutes they did allow us. This did not seem to be the same Guatemala City we had been walking through and driving through earlier. It was the true edge. We could see inside of houses where piles of scavenged rags, plastic bottles, solvent and chemical containers, and scrap metal served as furniture. Children were sleeping and playing amidst this stuff; their parents and older brothers and sisters were over the side, down in the mountains below, mining the dump.

We also met a group of Americans from Chapel Hill who were painting a small learning and recreation center. They were also too busy to talk much and suggested we try to contact them later at their base in Antigua. Evidently they were associated with a clinic and NGO there.

**Observation:** It was interesting to see these far edge programs. There was a sense of real "desperation" and that any little success was a great success. In Chimaltenango we are working with a community of people who maintain and respect their cultural values. There is a firm, though impoverished, social construct upon which can be built an even more successful health clinic and education program. They share a spiritual hope and strength for the future for which we should feel truly grateful.

Evening: supper at the home of Dennis Smith and family.

Dennis as usual was a great source of Guatemala information and understanding. He was able to clear up some of the apparent paradoxes that we had seen over the past two days.

1. The Peace Accords represent a thoughtful and well meaning document. But although its principle objective is national healing and rebuilding of Guatemala with social justice for all people, it still has not been ratified as law of the land on the national level.

2. In some government positions there are some good, well qualified, and highly principled people. But there are very few. We had obviously met some of them today. But the elected politicians for the most part have private agendas, motivated by self-interest. These people want to keep Guatemala pretty much the way it has always been. Therefore, even if social justice laws are passed, there is very little assurance that they will be enforced.

He also suggested that the Mayan presbyteries, while originally

championing rights and justice for indigenous peoples, today the K'iche, Kec'che, and Kakchiquel are very much interested in acquiring and holding on to political strength (wealth). Although this may appear to be a practical thing, it becomes counter productive when it closes doors to relationships or opportunities which can be advantageous to the community these groups profess to serve.

1. We were somewhat confused as to what this really meant. At the time we were specifically talking about Moises Colop. It seems that over the past few years, Moises had lost the political power and position he had once held, and all of his recent activities had been oriented to regaining that position rather than serving the community he had been designated to serve.

2. Dennis remarked it curious that Ronaldo & Margarita could not or did not arrange any of the government meetings and that Lucy and I had found these people on our own. This was especially curious since the Vice minister of Education, Demetrio Cojti, and the Director General of Bilingual Education are both Kakchiquel.

3. I observed that perhaps the concept of networking is not as established in Guatemala as it is in the US and he agreed that at some levels networking doesn't exist at all. Dennis suggested the key word is paternalism. To the poor woman in the village, one wants to say: I am giving you this. I am making your life better. One doesn't want to have to say we, or - I with the government's help am giving you this.

The above may be somewhat troubling, but it does explain a number of paradoxes and contradictions we have experienced over the past years with our mission in Chimaltenango. It also explains why there seems to be so many dingy and marginal "Christian" schools and service centers throughout the cities. Throughout the trip we noticed marginal clinics and schools in Xela and Zunil as well as Guatemala City and other towns we passed through. It was as if pooling resources and mutual cooperation were unheard of.

Our evening with Dennis Smith and his family was very pleasant, and there were some points and suggestions he made that I wish we had been able to expand on. But it had been a very long day, and both Lucy and I were on overload and very tired. I do intend to pursue some of these questions by e-mail over the next week.

Perhaps we should see our friends the Kakchiquels as individuals of history. Now emerging from years of civil war, they are trying to wrest some degree of political self-determination in a land steeped in racial and class constructs, constructs which have traditionally denied self-determination to its indigenous peoples as well as its poor. As long as we recognize the implications of their "historical baggage" we will be able to understand the duality of their community objectives and their agendas of apparent self-interest.

Dennis said he was wary of anyone who thought they had Guatemala figured out. Actually, he suggested that the words "understand" and "Guatemala" probably could not be used in the same sentence, at least a sentence that was both honest and wise. Perhaps "understand" should be replaced with "be aware of."

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Further notes on Guatemala City:

Hotel Colonial, 7 ave 14-19 Zona 1 - still convenient, secure and well run, ample parking.

El Anfitrión, S.A. DE IMERI, 6 ave. calle 3 - 34 Zona 1 - excellent family style restaurant that Nelson introduced us to. One block south of Central Plaza on 6th avenue. Set lunch.

Los Cebollines, 6 ave. calle 9 - 75 Zona 1 - old stand by for Baltimore

Presbyterians, great soup, but not pleasant to go to after 8 p.m. Too many "stressed out" street people in doorways.

Spanish language book stores:

Alfa Beta, Sociedad An-nima 7a. Avenida 4-51, Zona 1 -two blocks north of the Cathedral)

Sophos S.A. Av. Reforma 13-89, Zona 10 - in El Portal, 5 blocks south of US Embassy. Sophos also has a very cosmopolitan atrium coffee shop which serves the best black bean soup in the city.

+ If a group staying in Hotel Colonial walk from the hotel up 7th Avenida to the Plaza Major but then go "east" on 8th Calle to 10th Avenida, drop down to Museo Nacional de Artes e Industrias Populares (closed Sat. & Sun.) on corner of 9th Calle, then go east on 9th Calle to 12 Avenida to the Church of Santo Domingo. This is a surprisingly pleasant residential neighborhood. And on Saturday morning we found it refreshing after walking through such frantic and heavily trafficked areas on Thursday and Friday. Proceed down 12th Avenida to 13th Calle then turn right to get back to 7th Avenida, but check out El Teatro Abril, an authentic 1920's movie theatre, as yet in its tattered glory and open for tours on the corner of 8th Avenida.

+ Another spot to see, if one really wants to see the extremes of the fantastic at work in Guatemala, is the chapel of Nuestra Señora de las Angustias built by Don Felipe Yurrita Castañeda. Begun in 1928 by "maestros" Felix and Regino Velasquez and finished in 1941, it is a wonderful exercise in faith and folly, innovation and bombast. Standing on its angled lot surrounded by modern building of high and low design, too much traffic, too many vendors and streets impossible to cross, it could well serve as a metaphor for Guatemala trying to find its place as an emerging third world nation in the 21st century. Go down 7th Avenida into Zone 4. Here the streets are numbered as Via and Ruta and are on an oblique grid. The chapel is on Via 8 and Ruta 5, but stay on 7th Avenida and check the eastern sky for a lopsided crown to the east when crossing Via 8.

+ Chicken buses to Chimaltenango can be found at 4th Avenida and 19th Calle. They muddle around like the chickens they carry, so one must ask as well as read the bus. Fare to both places is about 4 quetzals. One hour to Chimaltenango. Best to travel light.

**Foundaci-n Familias de Esperanza - Antigua**

**Monday 29 August                      Antigua-      Common Hope Organization**

The principle reason we had come to Antigua was to meet with Tamalyn Jackson Guieterrez tamalyn@guat.commonhope.org  
Common Hope/ Foundaci-n Familias de Esperanza  
Camino a San Juan del Obispo km2, Antigua phone 011 - 502-832-411

We had an appointment for 2:30 p.m. to discuss their programs in teacher training, parent day care training, and Lorana stoves.

Specific question and issue: Has the government, specifically the Ministry of Education been helpful in your creating training programs and education initiatives?

A. The ministry of education puts on a good show, but has little real money to follow up on the programs they create. (This year teacher pay was cut to a point that all teachers worked for three month without pay checks.)

1. Many positions are held by political appointees who believe three years of education is sufficient for most of the people of Guatemala.

2. The school calendar year does not suggest an earnest commitment to education. There are too many holidays, both religious and national. Children had Friday, Monday, and Tuesday off to celebrate the Pope's visit on Monday.

3. The program Reforma Educativa calls for further professional training for all teachers, but shortens the school week to only four days so teachers are able to go to designated training centers. This gives children a three day weekend, and in many weeks of the year because of other holidays, children may have only a two or three day school week. There are seldom other "educational" resources available during these off times, so in many cases, school just does not become a major part of a child's life in Guatemala. Of course the private schools, demand more of a commitment from both children and parents and consequently produce better students. These are usually members of the upper class, which also includes a small number of successful Mayans.

4. Advanced teacher training in itself would be a good idea. . .if it were truly advanced and being taught by people who really knew what they were doing. Many teachers refuse to go because the "trainers" are not really qualified and know little more than the people they are trying to train.

5. The content objectives of the advanced professional training is truly ambitious. There are courses on multiculturalism, bilingual education, as well as an attempt to introduce inquiry learning. But the human resources and personnel to make these noble ideas become more than just ideas are extremely lacking. Consequently teachers as well as students have three day weekends.

6. Regardless of the high minded programs of MINEDUC, the teaching profession is not very inviting to young people in Guatemala. It used to

be a profession which offered social position and a reasonable job security. But today it seems little more than a pit of frustration and depression. Of course good and effective teachers who had become strong community members ten years ago were frequent targets for death squads and sudden disappearances.

#### The Public System

PRIMARY            grades 1 through 6  
BASICO            grades 7, 8, & 9 also called SEGUNDO

The career options:

Training & Professional 1 - 3 years after BASICO

1. secretary or bilingual secretary
2. accounting - simple book keeping
3. teaching for grades 1 through 9

B. Because Common Hope/Fundaci-n Familias de Esperanza were disappointed with the results of efforts to work with the national government, they no longer seek government approval or cooperation. In fact even asking the government for information or feedback frequently results in embarrassment. If the government cannot deliver, rather than simply admitting they do not have the material or resources they throw up a stone wall defense that can be disruptive. Their programs today are no longer associated with MINEDUC.

1. Common Hope offers a free workshop in inquiry training for teachers. Since most government programs in teacher training continue to present information in the traditional rote fashion, they are more content based than technique based. Common Hope's approach addresses diverse learning styles and special needs of students. This program was originally offered collaborately with the government as part of the MINEDUC professional training package. Common Hope was actually giving participating teachers a Q 200 weekly stipend. The teachers who participated taught in the schools in the general area of south Antigua and San Juan del Obispo. This is the area served by their clinic and other outreach programs. But since the government did not give any financial support nor did MINEDUC understand the theories of inquiry training, Common Hope no longer bothers with government cooperation.

2. They have also a program in special education for students with special needs and offer training to teachers in how to recognize and address these special needs.

3. Common Hope has also a program to teach parents how to set up and maintain pre-school and early learning centers. This is day care with an education initiative. Goals address synapsial stimulation as well as developing basic literacy and counting skills. The ultimate goal is to help parents to set up small centers in their neighborhoods and villages as simple business ventures.

+ Common Hope would be willing and happy to offer free training to teachers from our client areas in Chimaltenango. They suggest that we might give participants a cost allowance to cover their expenses from Chimaltenango to Antigua plus incentive bonus payable upon successful completion of the course.

Specific question and issue: How much is Common Hope/ Fundaci-n Familias de Esperanza able to count on local community support for their programs?

A. Collective involvement and participation in meeting a community need seems to be the exception in Guatemala. This is surprising, since both the Catholic church and the traditional indigenous societies both had organized groups who were dedicated to the greater good of the community. However, the years of civil war probably destroyed this infrastructure of community organization. In Guatemala, the words collective, community, and action were usually associated with Marxism and that brought trouble to the very organizations best suited to handling local issues.

1. It will probably be a generation or two before there is a sense of local obligation for philanthropy. Expressions of charity and public service in the middle and upper classes are virtually nonexistent. Altruism is going to have to be intentionally taught.

+ When visiting Guatemala, the CEO of 3M Corp. spent some days building a house with Habitat for Humanity. He invited the local 3M CEO to join him, and although the local man did (he actually was shamed into it) he never understood what the point was.

+ Some students from upper class families have helped in some Common Hope programs, especially the after school tutoring programs and they are always surprised that they have fun and that the students they help are much like themselves.

+ Although client families receive services for free, they are expected and shown how to make some small payment or contribution in the form of work at the site. This might be cleaning, working in the garden or giving some time in the work shops. This has a double reward: World Hope Organization gets some needed work done and the people who contribute the work begin to think of World Hope as "theirs."

2. Some of the volunteers who come from Antigua and adjacent areas have their own political agendas. Although they may be dedicated, they are often disruptive and divisive and have to be "let go". Common Hope is dedicated to helping people realize a healthier and better life. There is no ulterior goal.

B. Political or personal agendas can be a wide range of things, some are not disruptive. The student who wants to do volunteer work because he will get school credit is relatively benign because his ultimate objective does not affect the personal freedom of the client he is helping. But a volunteer who is a strident feminist tries to affect the thinking of the client towards a political goal, frequently to the detriment of the relationships within that client's family.

1. Common Hope believes in working with every member of the family. In

cases of abuse and sexism, it is as important to try to affect the behavior of the husband as it is to give the wife protective support. An attitude that alienates the man and actually compounds the distance between the husband and wife is counter-productive.

2. Another political agenda which is counter productive feeds on the wrongs of the past. Many people try to draw strength from the wounds and injustices they suffered in the past. There is no doubt they suffered greatly, especially if they lost family members. But there is no justice that would be great enough to ameliorate their loss. Money? of course not. Punish the wrong doers- who are they? The military? . . . the government? . . . the politicians? . . . the USA? . . . that group of guys in the next village? Everybody in Guatemala can point to somebody else.

The only "productive" path is to understand and support the new laws for social justice when possible and start a healing process by moving forward to a new Guatemala, but when current policies and laws seem lacking, try to join with the people who are trying to reform them.

**Observations:** Tamalyn Jackson Gutierrez was extremely articulate. She had spent her childhood in Guatemala and had experienced first hand the inadequacies of the school system. However, her opinions were based not only on her early experiences but the experiences she had as the Antigua Site Director of Fundaci-n Familias de Esperanza. She would probably be the first person to say that she is not an expert on Guatemala. But as she showed us around she demonstrated an enthusiasm about her programs and the people she was helping. She also seemed to see Guatemala as a place where so many contradictory things can happen at once. The lack of order and "reason" did not seem to distress her.

Perhaps the people in the United States believe a country of laws is a natural and obvious condition in which to live. Justice will naturally rise, reason will prevail for no person would knowingly wish to behave unreasonably. But in Guatemala there are so many forces at work, both destructive and creative. This is a land of a powerful natural energy not the cool stone logic of reason.

**Recommendations:**

We think it would be valuable for the Baltimore Presbytery group to include a visit to Common Hope/ Fundaci-n Familias de Esperanza on the October trip. There are so many resources there. Not only are there training programs that our friends in Chimaltenango could take advantage of, but there are workshops on how to build lorana stoves and temporary housing units. They have in situ a "temporary" school building which could serve as a community meeting house. This might present a "demonstrated need" option for future projects. I keep thinking about the cement block building we helped to build in Pacorral which is apparently unused.

Tuesday 30 July

Chimaltenango

Visited Escuela "Miguel Sulecio Morales"

2:00 p.m.

The school, primario through 6th grade, is situated in a working class neighborhood in El Tejar, a suburb of Chimaltenango. Accompanied by Saul Perez, we had a discussion with Israel Reyes, Principal. The school buildings themselves were in a very poor state of repair. There was much need of paint, replacement of broken glass in windows and patching in the cement pavement. The playground was littered with trash, rocks and broken glass. Perhaps this observation is purely cosmetic, but these things could have been dealt with "easily" by parents and other members of the school community. The school was surrounded by residences and small shops and one might have thought the people of the neighborhood would have taken a proprietary interest in "their" school. The children were on holiday today because of the Pope's visit.

Specific question and issue: With the homes of many of the students so near at hand one might think that the parents would feel responsible and take a physical interest in the school their children attend. Is there a parents or community organization to help with the immediate needs of the school?

A. The parents of these children have no available money or time. They work in fincas and factories, some on the other side of Chimaltenango. They leave for work very early and return home very late. They have very large families which demand all the time and money they can find.

1. It would not occur to the people here that they have the "ability" to improve the school in a meaningful way. This would be something they would have to be taught. They see it as the government's school and property of the Ministry of Education. They believe it is really is up to the Ministry of Education to fix up and take care of the school. A public school education is "guaranteed" free. Parents feel they should not be expected to help in repair of the schools.

2. Even still, if some parents were to help to fix up things and donate their time, where would the money come from? There is some money for school repair at the beginning of the school year, but that's usually spent on fixing what was broken last year. There is nothing available to fix what gets broken during the school year.

B. Beyond this very basic problem of no time and no money, there is the sense held by many members of the community that the school represents the culture of the conquistador. It's not just the Mayans who believe this but the working class Ladinos believe it as well. Many of them simply feel that the school is superfluous. It has no real bearing on their lives and futures. It's little more than a place where their children can go while parents are off at work. And when the children are a little older, they two will join the parents in the factory and on the finca. If in the meantime they have learned to read a little and count, then good. But these skills are not looked upon as improving their lives. Maybe the reading and writing and other education is good for the upper classes, but for the people in El Tejar, there are just not the opportunities available that call for much education. Even if a student excels, it is unlikely incursion costs for further education in an instituto can be met.

1. Maybe in time the lack of community interest in its school can be reversed. But it will take a definite learning experience to cause people here to think of "our school" and "our pueblo." This would need a workshop in

community action and organizing. Because of the events in recent history, people are reluctant to get involved in this sort of thing, even when it could be to the advantage of their children. Neither the local nor national government would be much protection if there were trouble.

2. Also there really is no incentive. Parents believe their children will do pretty much what they have done, no better and probably not any worse. One really works as an individual and member of a family. The idea of uniting with other members of a community for some distant or abstract goal doesn't make a lot of sense. Besides one might have to do something they don't want to do. It's very difficult to see how such a sacrifice would be a good thing.

Specific question and issue: How has the MINEDUC program of education reform affected Escuela "Miguel Sulecio Morales"?

A. Some of the teachers go for advanced professional training twice a week; all others go once a week. But the government trainers are not very good so there is not very much credibility. Many of the experienced teachers don't go at all. Still we have a four day school week.

B. None of the new text books, the ones that teach cultural diversity and citizenship, have come to El Tejar. The standard text books we have been using are free, but there are never enough of them. Some students have to buy them in the stores. Most of the time the text books we order from MINEDUC don't show up until three or four months into the school year. One might think that the government does not print the books until the order is in so they know how many to print. We could perhaps order the books for next year (January) right now, but the government would still wait until all the orders from other schools are in. Maybe the students and teachers of El Tejar should create their own books.

1. There are 800 students at Escuela "Miguel Sulecio Morales" spread over 6 grade levels. But this number can fluctuate greatly throughout the school year. Parents go off to work in a finca on the coast and the whole family may go. Four or five kids from one family may just disappear. They may go to school on the coast or just work along side their parents. Maybe twenty five or thirty families leave. That can be a sizable number of kids out from the school. And then the work on the coast is finished, here they are back again after having missed four or six weeks of school. And they are behind. Where do they fit now in the class? The situation is extremely difficult. If we knew they were leaving we could give them something to take with them or we could try to arrange for them to go to school in their new location. If we knew when they were coming back, we could make special preparations for them to catch up. Their parents just do not see that school is important. This of course makes the teacher's life very hard.

2. The Education Reform programs expect the teachers to retrain, to improve professionally. But the materials and support to help them be more effective in the classroom, to actually enjoy some success with their students is not there. Those pretty posters and bilingual road signs aren't a lot of help. The teaching profession used to be a promising career to students after basico. It was a useful step to the university. But now the job is just too frustrating. There are 35 students in a class. Fifteen could disappear, new ones suddenly appear, then the fifteen are back. Where is there any chance for continuity in what one teaches?

3. One can easily understand why there is now a shortage of teachers.

**Observation and recommendation:**

One of our initial objectives was to learn the feasibility of offering scholarships to deserving students towards completing the nine years of basic education. However, it is obvious that we should devise a way to offer some sort of incentive to encourage good teachers to stay in the profession, at least in the schools of Labor de Falla and Cerro Alto. Also it might be good to devise an incentive to encourage good students from Labor de Falla and Cerro Alto to consider teaching as a profession.

Perhaps we might be able to work out an arrangement with Common Hope. The major complaint with the MINEDUC training programs is that they don't have credibility. If we could encourage teachers who are associated with our client communities to experience training that would give them real skills and instill confidence in their work, this might be a reasonable incentive.

Also it might be useful to encourage Saul and Margarita to begin an active dialogue with parents of our communities which stresses the importance of education and an empowerment for the future of their children. The conversation we had with Israel Reyes was vigorous and Saul was intense in his contributions. Both men understood the situation completely and are desperately hoping that there is some way for improvement. When we suggested there should be some sort of workshop to help parents realize the importance of education for their children, Saul emphatically let us know that he believed that such a workshop was possible and would help.