

Building: Excellence in Education

How would you respond to the following? You are about to register your six year old in the public education system. The closest school to attend is a two-hour walk from your home. You don't own a car, but even if you did you probably wouldn't drive your child there, given the condition of the road and the fact it would only reduce the time to get her there by about one half hour. The school is free, but there aren't any books. Any educational materials your child will use will be photocopied and you will have to pay for that. You'll also have to pay for her uniform and any other costs apart from sitting at the desk (if there is a desk). Your child will be in a class of forty, and more than likely the teacher will also be paired up to another class, perhaps a six grade class. The teacher is ill-prepared as a teacher, graduating only from High School with a concentration in pedagogy. There will be many days that the teacher will not be there, other days that school will be cancelled for reasons not well explained. The school is unpainted, dilapidated, the roof leaks, and there is only a dirt floor. Your child will attend six grades (likely over a period of nine years) at which point he will "graduate." He will probably not continue any formal education because it is no longer "free" or mandatory, it is even farther away than the two-hour walk, and your son will have to work (at age twelve to fifteen) because it is the only way for the family to survive. After six years of mandatory primary education, it is a good possibility that your child will not have learned how to read or write. Welcome to Honduras. It's even worse in the Frontera.



You wouldn't stand for it. You want your child to have every opportunity to succeed in life, and you know success is a fairy tale without a decent education. You expect that the public school system will provide that education, even as you remain the primary educator for your child. You consider all of this as your right as a citizen of a free country. As you should. You wouldn't stand for anything less. Neither will we. We clearly understand as you do, that the only clear path to success, and the only proven formula for community development, is education. You know it. We know it. You wouldn't stand for a sub-par education. Neither will we.



Rural School in Honduras

There are better systems of education in Honduras. They are private institutions, mostly bilingual, charging tuition, and graduating students that become the next generation of professionals in Honduras. Many of these schools offer some scholarships to poor families. But they are very selective in offering those. Initially they may offer a great many scholarships, but as years pass and the school becomes more dependent on securing income from tuitions, the scholarship quota lessens to become a token percentage of the school population. The scholarship kids are recognized, singled out and often picked on. Not being able to afford personal computers, internet access, books and materials, the scholarship students do not enjoy the success of richer classmates. So, for all intents and purposes, a good and meaningful education is the privilege of the rich in Honduras.

Unjust certainly, but more than unjust. It means that there is essentially no means for the poor to develop. Much less so, the people of the Frontera have literally no hope of securing a good education and breaking the generational cycle of poverty. For all that we have invested in Honduras and the people living on the Frontera, we cannot let this situation stymie the hope for real development. It is because of this that we are seriously investing in education.



Good Shepherd Bilingual School

But it is not enough to build another private school. Nor is it enough to sponsor a few poor children by way of scholarships, though we do this too. We need to create the foundation for a sea change, so to speak, in education in Honduras. For this we needed to create a partnership. So that is what we did. The local mayors of the seven municipalities, the Department of Education in Honduras and in Intibucá, the parents of the children attending the bilingual school, and Shoulder to Shoulder have all sat together at the same table to invest in education. Our school is the only **public bilingual school** of a quality education in all of Honduras. This is not an easy journey. Then again, that which is worthwhile and effective is seldom easy. We are building something unique, and when we say we, we truly mean we: the local and national governments, the people (very poor but very committed), Shoulder to Shoulder, and you. In these synergetic relationships, we are changing the understanding and meaning of education in Honduras.



Two Present School Buildings at the Good Shepherd Bilingual School

Whereas everyone is doing their part, Shoulder to Shoulder's part is critical. We have provided the excellence in education in materials and curriculum. We have provided English-speaking volunteers. We have provided state-of-the-art technology. We have provided the buildings. We have two buildings now able to house four grades and a library. But in February of 2017, we will have five grades, kindergarten through fourth, and we will need another building with three additional classrooms to secure space through the sixth grade. With everyone doing their part to maintain excellence in education, we have to ask you again to find the means to be generous. We want to recognize you in **"Building Excellence in Education"**. Please continue to be a part in something that gives the people of Intibucá the opportunity to break a vicious cycle of poverty. Give them the gift of education.



For your gift, we will recognize you or someone you wish to honor or memorialize. For a gift of \$100, your name, or the name of those you wish to honor or memorialize, will be published on our web site. For a gift of \$250, we will engrave your name, or the name of those you wish to honor or memorialize, on one-half of a brick on the front wall of the school building. For a gift of \$500, we will engrave your name, or the name of those you wish to honor or memorialize, on a full brick on the front wall of the school building. For a gift of \$1000, we will engrave your name, or the name of those you wish to honor or memorialize, on our Plaque of Gratitude the school building. For any gift, in any quantity, you will be part of "Building Excellence in Education". Please, think of the importance of education in the life of your own child and make a commitment to bringing about the change to end the oppression of poverty.

Building Excellence in Education



Simply return to the newsletter and click on the school icon appearing on the right side of the newsletter.