

# **Indigo Schools Project**

## **Goal**

Promoting social-emotional skills in K-12 schools

## **Location**

Km. 2.5 Carretera a San Martín Jilotepeque, Chimaltenango 04001, Guatemala

## **Users**

350 students, 500 parents, 35 Staff and 5 Volunteers.

Total: 890 users

## **Organization**

Fundación Rose - <http://fundacionroseguatemala.org/>

Mesoamericano School - <https://mesoamericano.edu.gt/>

## **The Problem**

One in five children in Guatemala have chronic malnutrition and, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, that number will likely go up as food shortages and unemployment skyrocket. The combination of malnutrition with trauma from family dysfunctionality and a broken public health system greatly aggravates the problem. The result is that our K-12 schools are filled with children who are very often afflicted with mental and/or emotional problems. School institutions are doing precious little to mitigate the negative impact of these issues. This negligence of school institutions leaves the country's children to fend for themselves which is a formula for disaster. The drop out rates are staggering and the comparative performance in Language and Math is among the lowest in Latin America. For instance, an average Guatemalan child reads three grade levels below the average Latin American child in the same age group. Outside the city this problem is intensified and even more amongst children who are identified as being of Mayan descent.

The average adult outside Guatemala City has the equivalent of a 4th grade education and lives an existence dedicated to survival. The national health program is in shambles and can barely help the extreme cases. Mental health assistance is almost non-existent and help to deal with emotional disorders are unheard of. Children regularly attend school on an empty stomach, and suffer from problems such as chronic stress, child depression and anxiety disorders. Furthermore, many children with mental health issues are labeled as disruptive, lazy or disobedient, and punished rather than helped. Even then, many children view their school as a refuge from their chaotic personal world and try to find emotional support in teachers or administrators.

This negligence and lack of support is perpetuated by an outdated national system of education whose agenda is to preserve the status quo which is anything but optimal. It's an underfunded system with poorly trained teachers who are the product of the same system, and often suffer from the same deficiencies as their students (i.e., low language, Math and thinking skills). This system is oblivious to the mental health crisis which exists in the schools.

There are no schools in Guatemala that utilize anything resembling the program we are proposing at Fundacion Rose. Our traditional educational system only focuses on testable skills in math and language. By focusing on the whole being our program creates an extraordinary environment where students and teachers can reach their highest potential.

### **Project description**

We are proposing a comprehensive K-12 school transformation program that places bio/mental/emotional health at the foundation of all educational programs. This is to be done working concurrently on four angles of the problem: (1) A solid foundation of bio/mental/emotional health, (2) The use of exploration, art, and play as vehicles for learning, (3) an emphasis in language skills and (4) using a STEAM approach to transfer science and technology skills.

This model will integrate the acquisition of social-emotional skills with academic performance. The effect of this initiative is to reduce the incidence of mental/emotional dysfunction in children and adolescents with the added value of a program that will transfer to them valuable life skills.

Our proposal begins with Colegio Mesoamericano, an existing school owned and operated by Fundación Rose. This school has already started the program and is currently reaping some of the benefits. The idea is to invest resources on fine tuning the biamental and emotional health component and develop and package the program with manuals, training materials, a practical toolbox, and a group of professionals that will be prepared to export it to other schools, thereby multiplying the positive impact throughout the country.

### **Stages**

This program works in four stages:

Stage 1: Model school and pilot. The school embodies all 4 aspects of an Indigo School. The program is piloted in Colegio Mesoamericano.

Stage 2: Proof of concept. Select 3-5 schools to implement the program and generate efficacy data.

Stage 3: Package Indigo toolbox manuals and procedures. Designate and train instructors, and prepare manuals and procedures.

Stage 4: Export. Select three schools in the region that are willing to undergo the Indigo transformation and begin the replication process.

## **Business Model**

The Indigo Schools Project adds value to any K-12 school system and to society as a whole. This value is in the form of enhanced human potential and valuable life skills.

Here are a few areas where the project adds value:

- Self-regulation, self-esteem and social skills. Our students learn to recognize, name and accept their emotions. They also learn ways to express and regulate these emotions appropriately and develop social skills like empathy, listening, cooperation, assertiveness and conflict resolution.
- Language skills in Spanish. Our students who graduate from our program read 2,000,000 words each year and develop writing and public speaking skills.
- Language skills in English. Indigo Schools guarantee that children graduate with a CEFR B2 level of English proficiency as a minimum. This alone will give a person in Guatemala an edge for more and better employment.
- Science and Math skills. Indigo schools promote and enhance in children their natural curiosity and desire to experiment and find out how things work. As a result, a higher than average number of our graduates pursue scientific and engineering careers.
- Digital Citizenship. Our students grow up using technology in all aspects of their academic learning. They also learn the responsible use of it and they acquire profitable skills such as coding and website design and optimization.

## **Potential long-term impact**

This program has the potential to impact and transform whole communities. The benefits of the project reach students, teachers, administrators and parents (currently 890 people). As the time passes and as a result of the cumulative effect of all these lines of impact, the school can strongly influence other institutions and individuals in the community and eventually the whole country. This project will mitigate the deficiencies of the current educational and mental health system.

## **Project Video**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNU0IkYbw&feature=youtu.be>

## **Author**

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