Education in Guatemala

Overview:
**Capital:** Guatemala city.
**Population:** 14,099,032  49% of total pop is urban (2010)
**Official Language:** Spanish 60%  Other languages: Amerindian languages 40%
**Language of instruction:** Spanish
**Ethnicity:** Ladino (mostly in urban areas) Indigenous (in rural highlands)

**Structure of Education**
- 6 years for Diploma of Elementary Ed.
- 7 years to be a Nursing Aide (Auxiliar de Enfermeria)
- 9 years for up to “lower secondary school” General Basic Education
- 11 years for Bachiller en Ciencias Y Letras (high school graduate in science and letters). (upper secondary)

**Stats:**
- 2 out of 5 children finish grade 6.
- 19% of high school aged youth are in school.
- 1990s – 39% of children completed grades 1-6.
- 2006 – 72.5% completed grades 1-6

**Schedule:**
Jan 15-Oct 15
- Heavy rainfall during rainy season will cancel school (June-Oct)
- Teachers may simply not show up and thus no school
- Academics are not a top focus. Festivals and events take priority.

**Grading System (Secondary School)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92-100</td>
<td>Excelente (Excellent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>88-91</td>
<td>Muy Bueno (Very Good)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-87</td>
<td>Muy Bueno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>73-79</td>
<td>Bueno (Good)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60-72</td>
<td>Bueno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>51-59</td>
<td>Minimo acceptable ( Barely Acceptable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-50</td>
<td>Reprobado (Fail)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Values:

- Helping out with the family income or with child care affects attendance.
- Parents in rural villages may have limited schooling and be illiterate. There seems to be an improved attitude towards schooling but less priority for girls in rural communities.
- Free and compulsory for six years. But only 30% finish primary school... (attendance is not enforced) 81% of children are enrolled in primary and 18% of eligible go on to attend secondary.
- Children from rural areas (often indigenous) will often work instead of attending school.... pressures to work and help out family economically.
- Students do not complete elementary education... especially poor families,, and especially girls. (second lowest in Latin America)
- School supplies, books, uniforms etc are an expense for poor families and not funded by gov’t.
- UNDERFUNDED. Less than 15% of classrooms meet minimum standards of space and supplies ... esp rural schools.
- Gender inequality... indigenous girls in rural areas in particular. Women in domestic roles.
- Teacher recruitment is difficult for rural areas.
- Student to teacher ratio is about 39: 1 for primary (1999)
- Guatemala students consistently score lower academic achievement scores than students from central and Latin America for math and basic language skills
- the Center for Economic and Social Rights states, "Guatemala has among the lowest levels of health and education spending relative to GDP in Latin America.

Themes/ Issues:

- Gender inequality
- Indigenous vs. Ladino.
- Rural/urban accessibility
- Underfunding, in rural areas.

Teachers:

- requirement is high school education
- mostly from larger towns and have to commute 1-2 hours each way (so rural location is not ideal job site)
- little differentiation of learning.
- May not have access to curriculum or teaching materials (esp in rural schools)
- Administration is lacking. Unqualified admin, undesirable position to have to manage staff, funding, gov’t bureaucracy, etc.
Educational Philosophy:
- Teachers direct learning and teach how they were taught
- Rote
- Up to 45-60 students/class
- Not much standardized structure. Little accountability and assessment is questionable

Evaluation:
- Low funding on gov’t level for education. Underfunded schools.
- Improvements since the 1996 Peace accords.
- World Bank loans to improve quality of elementary education in rural areas. ($33 million between 2000-2004) but results are lacking.
- Opportunities differ based on rural/urban setting. Marginalization based on access.

Curriculum Options at the Primary (gr 1-6) Level:
- Communication & Language L1 (mother tongue), L2 (Spanish, Garifuna, Maya, Xinka), L3 (English, French, German, etc)
- Math
- Natural sciences and technology
- social sciences
- art
- P.E.
- Citizenship education (Formación ciudadana)
- Productivity and development (Productividad y Desarrollo)

Curriculum Options at the Secondary Level:
- General Ed (Ciclo Prevocacional) 3 years (more like middle school... aka general secondary education)
- Diversified Secondary (Ciclo Diversifacado) 2 years--- pre-requisite for University. “Bachillera” certificate/diploma
- Technical Secondary school (Perito Industrial, Agricola, Contador) 3 years - specialize in ie: education, agriculture, business — certificate/diploma
- Often in urban areas and often associated with Catholic church. Language of instruction may be English or Spanish
- Since 2001, high school grad requirement = teach 5 people how to read (raising awareness of need and helping solve illiteracy)
- Bachillerato = high school diploma, eligible for university. (final 3 years complete)
### (Potential) challenges for Teaching in Guatemala:
- Frustration with administration
- Lack of government funding, lack of resources (books, stationary, teaching material) and upkeep of schools in rural areas.
- Irregular attendance due to economic constraints and family support
- Illiteracy, shallow reading background
- Large class sizes

### Potential Challenges when learning in Canada:
#### Challenges Guatemalan students may face in Canada:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Possible Resolution</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student does not show up to school</td>
<td>Students accustomed to festivals and events taking precedence over academic studies. School cancellations are common. Students have responsibilities to care for siblings at home or support household financially.</td>
<td>Explicitly teach the importance of attendance. Emphasize responsibilities and requirements of school while being aware that other demands may be made of them to support family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female students do not feel like school is their place.// belong in school.</td>
<td>Girls, especially of non-urban communities have domestic responsibilities. Schooling is not a priority for them as much as it is for boys. They may have known older siblings/relatives that have not completed elementary education and see education as optional.</td>
<td>Self esteem. Set up a clearly accepting environment. Teach inclusiveness and equality. Be aware of gender stereotyping.</td>
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Resources:


