



Project Learn Belize

Project Learn Belize School of Education: The University of San Francisco + 2130 Fulton Street + San Francisco, CA 94117

Two Year Anniversary

Dr. Geoffrey Dillon, S.J. ~ Director

At the end of October, we marked the second anniversary of *Project Learn Belize*. Because of the support of so many friends, the programs first dreamed about in October of 2007 have made remarkable strides. The bonds of support and genuine affection between the community of Dangriga – especially the children, faculty and families of Sacred Heart Primary School – and the USF community continue to grow. Most importantly, for everyone who travels with us, it remains an experience of learning.

It's only right, then, that we send along this "progress report" of some of the highlights of our first two years. As we look forward to the coming holiday season, we want to wish you a very joyful Christmas, and blessed New Year.

Teacher Assistant Program

January 2008 + January 2009

In two-week immersion trips, undergraduate seniors (Arts & Sciences: *Dual Degree in Teacher Preparation Program*) and graduate students (School of Education) in the USF Teacher Credential program worked in classrooms at Sacred Heart School in Dangriga. Beside their talents and energies, these Teacher Ed. students shared their acquired knowledge and passion for teaching with the faculty and staff of the school.

In addition to the learning that occurred in working with the Belizean teachers and school children, the USF student teachers had opportunities to dialogue with members of the



USF Teacher Assistants & PLB staff: January, 2009

Dangriga community. Over the course of two weeks, the USF students heard from local experts on topics ranging from education and the Garifuna culture to health services and human rights advocacy. An essential feature of each visit has been post-trip opportunities for participants to reflect further on their time in Belize and its impact on their future teaching.

Details are being finalized for the third Teacher Assistant Program trip in January, 2010. Eight USF Teacher Ed. students are preparing lessons that will focus on improving the children's math skills and creative writing.



Teacher to Teacher Exchange



March, 2008

From the earliest stages of planning *Project Learn Belize*, it was envisioned that teams of USF/SOE faculty might provide training workshops, along with follow-up mentoring, for Belizean teachers. The “added value” of these ventures would be the long-range effects of “teaching teachers”.

After two days of observing teachers and students in their classrooms, Dr. Hazel Brauer, Adjunct Professor at USF and a reading specialist for the Jefferson School District (Daly City), conducted a day and a half workshop in March, 2008, on “best practices” in children’s literacy for the faculty & staff of Sacred Heart.

June, 2008

In June, 2008, Dr. Yvonne Bui, along with three USF master’s graduates in Special Education (Elias Barlow, Mary Busby, & Robin Irej), provided a full week of teacher in-service training, focused on students with learning disabilities, for thirty-two Sacred Heart staff and faculty. The “team” administered over forty individual student assessments for children identified by their teachers with potential special needs. In addition to daily workshops, the USF group engaged in classroom observations and demonstrations of differentiated instruction.



June, 2009

Brian Donovan (SOE/TED '09) captivated Sacred Heart Standard V students during the final week of school in late June. Brian, who was named Teacher of the Year in San Francisco by the Herbst Foundation, used the medium of plastic water bottle rockets to introduce sophisticated math & science concepts, including water pressure, speed, and velocity. Standard IV students spent the week performing water quality studies of the town’s river, as well as the Caribbean shoreline adjacent to the school.

Building the Future

Sacred Heart Primary School, with 750 students, is one of five elementary schools in Dangriga, a town of 11,000 residents. The Belizean government provides salaries for staff and faculty, but little other financial support. Understandably, the US\$20/year tuition is hardly sufficient to support the upkeep of facilities, let alone provide the kinds of school supplies that are basic to learning. Accordingly, each participant on *Project Learn Belize* trips to Dangriga carries a second suitcase of books and supplies for the school. Those same participants assume all of the costs related to their trips.

Through the donations received, *Project Learn Belize* continues to honor its initial commitments to the renovation and expansion of facilities at Sacred Heart and other schools in Dangriga. The following are just a few examples:

+ January, 2008 witnessed the addition of five new classrooms and a school office, made possible by the matching grant of the first benefactor of *Project Learn Belize*.

+ The generosity of third grade girls at Convent Elementary School of the Sacred Heart in San Francisco over the past two years has bought desks and ceiling fans for their new friends at Sacred Heart-Dangriga.

+ A major renovation of Sacred Heart's small kitchen and lunch room was completed in August, 2008. Beautiful new wood tables and chairs were built by and purchased from the Mennonites. The school continues to feed breakfast and lunch to over 100 students each school day, who would otherwise go without meals.

+ In addition to school supplies and books, we continue to maintain and upgrade the school's computer center (originally created by previous donations from USA), as well as the purchase of overhead projectors and a new copier machine.



Abandoned building becomes 5 new classrooms & Principal's Office



BEFORE Kitchen / Cafeteria Renovations: Old classroom; no separate kitchen area; exposed butane tanks; plywood tables & benches; crumbling concrete floors



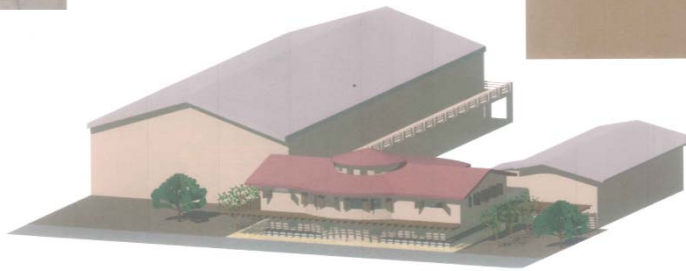
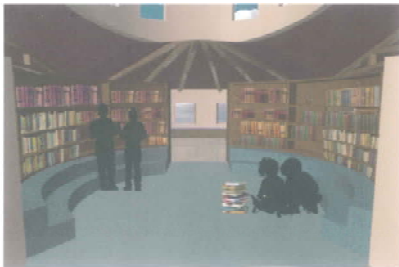
AFTER: new walls & ceilings; preparation/serving tile counters; individual mahogany tables & chairs; granite tile flooring; butane gas tanks moved outside

Project Learn Belize has expanded its understanding of "benefactor" to include the contributed services of volunteers who have joined us on various trips, doing major repairs and painting at the school. From a rewired school bell to the design and construction of much-needed storage cabinets around the campus, these volunteers have poured both talent and heart into anything that required attention.

The TEACHER to TEACHER EXCHANGE programs (see page 2) with their literacy and special education workshops had unforeseen consequences. Faculty and administrators at Sacred Heart began to realize the need for reading rooms/library, which would provide dedicated “quiet space” for students to improve their literacy. The possibility has already engendered great interest, both at USF and in Dangriga. Three design teams, composed of seniors from the USF Architecture Department, in consultation with Masters’ candidates in Reading from Teacher Ed., have produced preliminary designs for the project. The continued support of our benefactors may well make this dream a reality for the Sacred Heart community.



The proposed building will house two dedicated reading rooms, as well as a second floor library. The building will create an enclosed court yard, with a covered outdoor stage area for student programs.



We are indebted to the following benefactors, for their financial support of the on-going work in Dangriga, Belize.

Bartsch Charitable Lead Trust
 Kim & Brian Bird
 Patty & Chris Bird
 Students of Convent Elementary School
 Jane & Larry Costello
 Nicole & Jamie Cuellar
 Susie & Mark Dillon
 Richard Farmer
 T.J & Charlie Fechtel
 Beth & Bruce Fisher
 Cynthia & Glen Fitzmartin
 Karl Foerster
 Steve Heese
 Megan & Chuck Hernandez
 Marilyn & Jack Irons
 Class of 1979: Jesuit High School, Tampa
 The Koeplin Family Foundation
 Maureen & Nick Kuntz
 J.J. Lastelick

Renne & Bill Lokey
 Loyola House Jesuit Community (USF)
 Marguerite & Mike Marz
 Patricia McGinnis
 Nancy & Pat McLochlin
 Britt McNany
 Kristin & Eugene McNany
 In Memory of Dr. John Pletz
 Mary & Robert Ruffe
 Cathy & Mike Vance
 Blair & Fred Wellington



The University of San Francisco is recognized as a tax-exempt educational organization by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. TAX ID#: 94-1156628. All gifts to this fund are deemed restricted by the University, for the sole use and purpose of supporting the works of Project Learn Belize. No financial compensation for participation is provided to any member of the USF community from this fund. Contributions can be sent /made out to: Project Learn Belize ~ USF / 2130 Fulton St. / San Francisco, CA 94117