STUDY GUATEMALA

Education Hope Opportunity
Educación Esperanza Oportunidad

Annual Report 2023-2024

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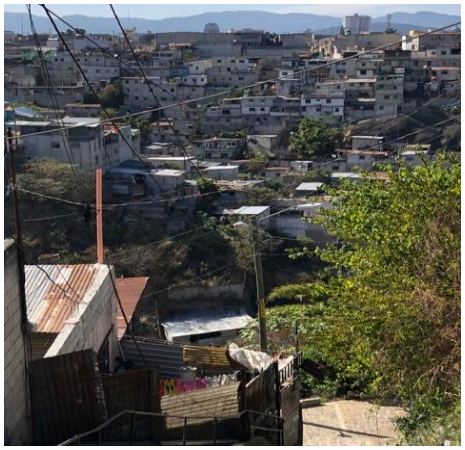
Jane Aitman, Chair of the Trustees visited the School in January/February 2024

This report is an update of progress in the last 18 months. We are delighted to be able to report to the Trustees, and supporters, a continuing positive note.

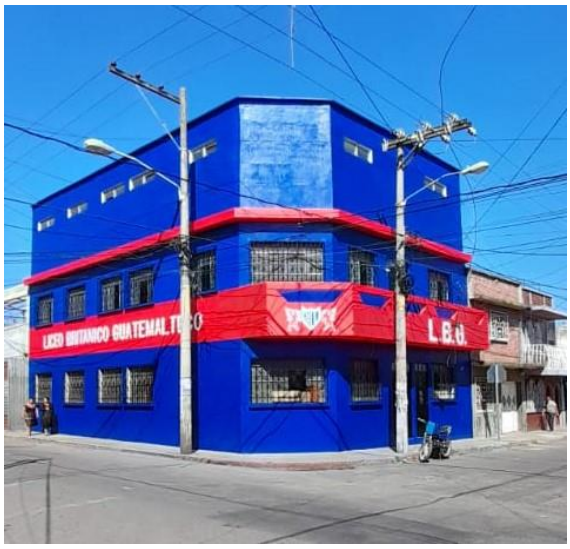
Jane's report.

After the significant changes following COVID and the changes following Eduardo's death, this was Jane's first visit to Guatemala in four years. She visited the school and the area around the it, La Limonada, where most of the families and children live. She found the area to be far more deprived and precarious than in previous visits; a sharp reminder of the changes in the country over the past years.



- ***School developments***

The school itself was in fantastic condition. It had been newly painted at the start of 2023 and 2024 and looked extremely smart.



In January 2024 Study Guatemala UK sent out additional £6500 to the standard three monthly January payment. This had been used to buy new musical instruments and storage cabinets for them; new computers; upgraded and repaired toilet/bathroom facilities; a new cooker and new storage cabinets for the administrative office as well as new doors offering more security. All of these were in situ and had delighted the teachers all round.

Governance of the School

The succession plan following Eduardo's tragic death was for Christhi to take over as Director. This required her to gain her Masters in Leadership which she did in 2022, and then her **PEM, Profesorado de Ensenanza Media**, (which refers to Pedagogy) which has enabled her to become the legal director. The family decided that the Estrada daughters would also get PEM to support the ongoing governance of El Liceo. The legalities of this process are yet to be finally completed, and still require an official stamp, a letter confirming that they are honourable persons from a lawyer, and police checks. However, these are technicalities and will shortly be written off and given the official stamp.

This will mean that Karen will be able to take over as Legal Director if required; Claudia too is in the process of completing her PEM.

Legalities

A question outstanding for the Trustees was that of the legal status of school which was registered and legally belonged to Eduardo, as agreed by the Trustees some years ago. Chishthi, with the help of a trusted Lawyer, has been undertaking the legal process to have the ownership of the school transferred

to her. This is well on the way to be being achieved; there will be some taxes owed on the building (something like inheritance tax) however she and the lawyer believe that the tax will be only approx. Q3,000. (£300) It is not clear currently if this is a one off payment or annual. It was also reassuring that the legal fees will be limited to Q9000.

School Finances

In discussion with Christhi, it became clear that the current costs of running the school are Q31,300 per month.

The school fees for each student are tapered varying from Q50 (£5) a month; Q100 per month or Q200 per month. The students supported on grants from Study Guatemala pay nothing.

These costs are significantly lower than any comparable school. A private school might cost anything from Q650 a month up. Public schools hardly function, with a lack of teaching staff, and suffering huge problems with safety.

Sadness for the School community*: A reminder of the acute challenges faced daily by the whole LBG community.*

Jane arrived in Guatemala to learn that Christhi's stepfather had died three days earlier having been admitted to hospital with a hernia in late December. Whilst in hospital he developed peritonitis. Poor health care led to his very sad death.

Jane also met with Dona Chenni, the wonderful loyal cook, and heard of the tragic death of her niece and her husband and their four children, who on November 23rd, died when a massive land slide in Zone 3 caused their home to be buried underneath the mud and earth. As is commonly the case in Guatemala, fears of the instability of the land was well known by the authorities, but no action was taken to prevent this tragedy.

Three days before Jane left one of the students' fathers was killed in a motor bike accident.

Last year, the violence prevalent in Guatemala took the life of a former student of the school. He was shot and killed while his motorcycle was being stolen.

Visiting Guatemala is always a sharp reminder of daily challenges faced by all.

Annual report from Director Christhi Navidad Estrada

Following the extremely difficult years of Covid, 2023 marked the beginning of all classes in school, leaving virtual learning behind. This was a challenge for teachers and students alike, encountering many emotional and psychological difficulties left following the isolation of Covid

The focus of all those employed in the school had been on helping the most economically disadvantaged students continue their studies. Young people had the desire to pursue education but needed lots of support and encouragement.

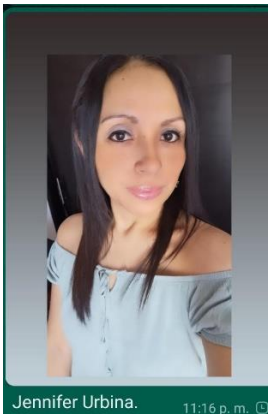
Students sponsored by Study Guatemala. Out of the 35 students sponsored by Study Guatemala, 8 of them achieved the best grades. Overall, all 35 students have performed academically in an extraordinary manner.

Teachers: Highlights, New Teachers, and Departures

In 2023 three teachers celebrated anniversaries, having worked in Licea Britanica Guatemalteca for many years. Miss Rossemary celebrated 20 years, Miss Helena 15 years, and Miss Jennifer 15 years working at the project. It is reassuring to have staff members who are committed to the institution's vision and clear that the vision of Phil Melling and Eduardo Estrada lives on in spite of their no longer being present.

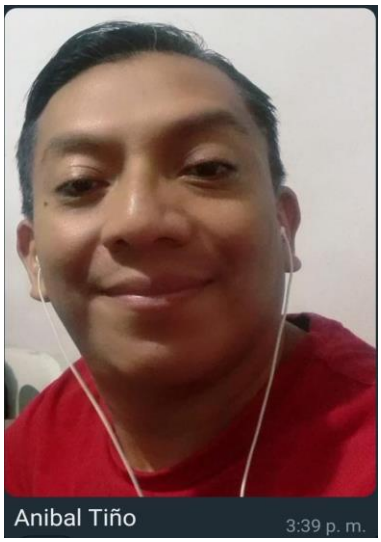
The Philip Melling Medal was awarded to teacher Rosemary Pessarosy for her 20 years of service with us.

Dona Chenni who has been working for 9 years feeding and nurturing the teachers and students alike. I include her to ensure she is equally valued as all other members of the school family.



Elena Rosemarry and Christhi Dona Jenni Dona Chenni and Jane

Another celebration is that of Professor Anibal Tiño who was chosen by the third-grade students as the best teacher of the year, as all the children became interested and inspired by him, and enthusiastic in their learning of Mathematics.



New teachers this year included : Miss Ileana, who teaches computer science, and Miss Silvia, who teaches communication and language. Claudia Estrada is teaching History and Karen Estrada English. They also and serve as substitutes when a teacher is absent for any reason.

What has gone well?

1. The number of students attending in person after Covid is now 100%; great progress! Although the transition was difficult for them, they had good adjustment to in-person classes. However, it is important to mention that many students have emotional and psychological problems such as anxiety and panic attacks, stemming from the pandemic.

2. **Parental involvement in the school and what they have done.**

Throughout the year, various meetings for parents have been held where the school's vision is explained, and parents are informed of their children's academic performance.

At the start of 2024 all parents were invited to join the meeting and together with their children, get involved in kicking off the best new year Meetings were held to explain the various activities planned for the year and to encourage parents to participate in supporting their children in various events.

3. **Special Achievements or Awards:**

- Verbal commendation from the departmental supervisor of the Ministry of Education for having no complaints regarding the management of Liceo Británico.
- A student from the school won the Municipal Excellence in Academics Award from the Municipality of Guatemala.
- Invitation from the National Palace to pay tribute to the flag of Guatemala.
- One of El Liceo's ex students is working locally as a mechanic. She is one of only 2 female mechanics in the Country – a great achievement for her and the school in its' promotion of education for girls

How have the exam results been for the students in general? Overall, the students' results have been good and in spite of challenges following COVID in the end, everyone achieved satisfactory grades.

Has there been any particular health issues? Students or teachers?

In general, there has been a noticeable increase in dengue fever.

In the year 2023, students have mainly experienced mental health issues due to the ongoing pandemic. This is reflected in anxiety crises, negative attitudes stemming from the loss of family members to COVID, and difficulties in socializing.

Physically, students have showed weakness as some fainted during a band rehearsal due to lack of physical activity and poor nutrition. This is associated with the lockdown experienced during the pandemic.

Achievements and Events of the Band:

Over the past year they have been very active even if smaller than before. Prior to the pandemic the band was made up of 80 members; at the time of visiting, there are only 30 band members (all great) but recruitment was underway for 2024. There are two excellent teachers to bring them all on, and one dance teacher for the choreography of Cheer Leaders.

Achievements include

- First place in the national dance corps competition of the band.
- Participation in a national and international television channel where we were congratulated for being one of the best musical bands.
- First place in the band competition at Santa Marta Mixco 2023.
- Exclusive invitation as the featured band in Panajachel.
- Invitation from the Municipality of Guatemala to participate in the family Sunday parade.
- Participation and first-place win in the Don Bosco band competition.

Finance

What have been the main financial challenges in the last year that are important for the Study Guatemala?

The budget that we agreed upon each year was sufficient to support the scholarship students. However, we observed that the major challenge would be due to the political crisis unfolding in Guatemala, causing prices to rise. We are

hopeful that in the year 2024, with the entry of the new government, everything will stabilize in our economy.

Some brief Plans for 2024

- The year began with an introduction to the new students through English and computer classes.
- The timetable this year introduces motivational talks every two months as it is crucial to support them psychologically and emotionally.
- Implementation of the English learning app (Duolingo) every two months will provide a more interactive learning experience.

New Admissions and outcomes

Admissions for the year 2024 took place in June, examining 52 students, all of whom passed.

- New admissions: 30 girls 22 boys
- Total students 192
- Total graduates from third grade 2023, 52 students

MI AMIGO
MAIHER

TIENDA

XIX

Muni
Guate
Ricardo Quiñónez
Alcalde de la Ciudad de Guatemala