

Evaluation Report on the Carmen Bajo School Fundación Amor y Esperanza Quito, Ecuador

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**Evaluation of the Carmen Bajo Elementary School in Quito, Ecuador
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The Carmen Bajo Elementary School, Centro Educativo Amor y Esperanza, is a small school located in an impoverished neighborhood in the northeastern section of Quito, Ecuador. The school serves the needs of the community in various ways. It provides day-care facilities for the infant children of residents of the community, and it provides quality education for a number of the children in the community. Approximately 100 babies and toddlers are enrolled in the day-care program, and 265 children attend the pre-K to fifth grade. In addition to the educational and child-care services, the school provides breakfast, lunch and two snacks for each child, Monday-Friday. The cost per child is \$52 - only 22% of the ~365 children are subsidized by sponsors at \$30/child currently. The parents of both subsidized and non-subsidized children still must pay from \$5-\$23 or an average of \$16/child; it is believed this will motivate the parents to feel more invested and more involved in their children's education.

The school is a respite for the children of the community who attend there. The community consists of hundreds of small, poorly constructed, poorly ventilated, dark, damp cement block homes built on the sides of a high mountain. The roads are not paved in most of the residential part of the community, making the roads impassable during rainy season, which may last six months of the calendar year (most of the winter and "spring" season). The rains often cause rivers of mud to cover the residential paths and areas around the homes making the children's ascending walk to the school and descending walk back home quite difficult and messy. In addition to the constant mud problems, the rains can cause landslides that bring destruction and chaos to the area. In the recent past a small child was killed when a mud-slide collapsed the corrugated zinc roof of a small house, crushing and burying the child. At the time of our visit, our van actually got stuck in the muddy road not one foot past the paved road in front of the school; the van had to be pulled out by another jeep. The roads in front and around the school were recently paved, making access to the school a bit easier for teachers and administrators who do not live in the community. For the time being, the paved road ends at the entrance of the school. There is hope that more streets near the school will be paved in the near future. This pavement program is not expected to reach the streets near the homes of most students any time soon.

In contrast to the children's poor living conditions, the school offers the school children a safe, very clean, well-lit, and well-ventilated environment. The five floors of the school are constantly being cleaned by a caring woman who serves as janitor. During our visit we noticed that her efforts to keep the building clean were continual. She swept and mopped the floors very early every morning; she swept the halls, staircases and classrooms when the children were at recess; her efforts were admirable. The children's bathrooms on each floor were clean and odor-free. The cafeteria area was cheerfully decorated with brightly colored chairs and walls. The cafeteria staff, also composed of members of the community, was friendly and welcoming to the students and teachers.

Strengths of the Carmen Bajo school facilities as compared to public schools in the area:

With the cost of \$52 a month per child, a person might consider the Carmen Bajo school to be a small private school. This is not the case. All children attending a public school in Quito must pay approximately \$20 dollars a month to attend the school, in addition to transportation costs and the cost of sending the children their lunch and snack. The \$52 paid to the Carmen Bajo school provides the students with much more. For that monthly fee, the children get their uniform sweater, two meals a day, two snacks a day, some direct medical attention combined with private medical insurance, and a **quality, Christian education.**

In our efforts to be thorough and fair in our evaluation of the Carmen Bajo school and program, we were allowed to visit a local public school. The contrasts with the Carmen Bajo school were eye-opening. The most blatant differences were in the care and maintenance of the school and classroom facilities, the number of children attending the school, the discipline of the students, and the overall "look" of the school.

Where the classrooms at the Carmen Bajo school are bright, well-ventilated, clean, and attractively decorated with colorful educational posters and Scripture verses, the classrooms at the public school,

though larger, were dark, dreary, damp, and dirty. Each classroom in the public school can hold 40 students or more. The public school is also built on the side of a mountain, but rather than housing the classrooms in a contained building such as in the Carmen Bajo school, this school is built in a descending direction, on a number of levels. To enter the public school's first level, one must go down approximately 20 steps, giving the impression that the school is built in a hole. Two separate levels of classrooms are each built around large cement playground facilities; the classrooms surround three sides of each playground. For each level, the classrooms are elevated about three to four feet from the playground level (the elevation varies from area to area). A narrow sidewalk built around the classrooms, at the same level, is the only access to them. There is nothing to protect the children from this three to four-foot drop from the sidewalk to the playground level. The steps leading up to the classrooms are located at the ends of the sidewalks and some are in ill repair. A second level, about 20-30 feet down the hill, is where the level for the classrooms for the older children is located.

We were able to look into two classrooms when we first arrived. The children were milling around the classroom, looking out of the windows (greeting us), and no effort was made to bring them into order. In the teacher's defense, however, it may have been that they were waiting for the recess bell which rang a few minutes after we arrived. At recess, all 750 children were out in the playground at the same time, eating their snacks or playing, or both! It was bedlam! The noise level was unbelievable. We were truly appalled by what we were seeing. The children were eating their snacks sitting on the cement floor of the playground or on the elevated sidewalks next to the classrooms. There was no effort to promote cleanliness or healthy eating habits. Once the children were outside, we did not see an adult supervising them. We learned that this group of 750 children was only the first group of the day. Since there are so many children in the community, the school day must be divided in half. The first group of 750 students attends in the morning; the second 750 children attend in the afternoon.

This public school also was suffering from lack of space. The public school director's "office" was located in the computer classroom, offering him or his assistants with no private space in which to work.

In contrast, the order found at the Carmen Bajo school was refreshing. Carmen Bajo children go to recess and eat their snacks and lunch at staggered times. They eat their snacks and lunch in a clean cafeteria, and then go to their play area. Wherever the children go-- whether to lunch, to recess, or to and from their classrooms-- they do so in an organized fashion. They walk quietly, single-file, with their hands behind their backs. A leader is chosen from each class to lead the group as they move around the building. The leader-child holds a large "stop/go" sign (a paddle), giving the children instructions to follow carefully. The teacher usually places him/herself strategically in the middle of the group, monitoring their behavior and progress. If there is a teacher-aide for the class, she usually follows at the end of the group. Since access to most areas of the school requires the students to go up and down stairs, this method helps them avoid the dangers of children falling or tripping on the steps. One *never* hears the noise level we heard at the public school.

The director's/ administrative office at the Carmen Bajo school is a private office. During the week we were there, we never witnessed a student walk into the office. It was respected as a place for adults only. This is not to say that the office projected an image of sternness; all parents and visitors were welcomed cordially and listened to intently. Various people worked in the office at the same time, and all managed to do their work efficiently and quietly, though there was an obvious atmosphere of camaraderie in the workplace.

Greatest strengths and assets of the school and program at the Carmen Bajo school:

Aside from the cleaner and more educationally inspiring facilities of the Carmen Bajo school we have already mentioned, there are other strengths that are evident, among them the strong educational curriculum followed, the quality of the teaching staff, and the strong Christian training the children are receiving

- **A strong educational curriculum:**

The children at the school in Carmen Bajo are challenged to excel intellectually and academically. They must simultaneously study two programs of study. They first must comply with the standards and requirements expected for their grade as designated by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (the program is called la Reforma Educativa). In addition to that, the Director of the school, Mr. Francisco Solá, has asked the teachers of Carmen Bajo to design educational objectives for each grade following the A-Beka textbooks used in Language Arts and Mathematics. The A-Beka program, as described in its own website, is a “rigorous, accelerated, and sequential” program. This is academically challenging for the students.

Most of the students are working well with the two programs of study, most working above their grade level, especially when compared to the children in other public and private schools in the city. The Carmen Bajo teachers themselves are encouraged with the children’s progress. Many have worked in other schools in Quito and find the quality of instruction and the demands on the students quite high. One teacher commented that the A Beka program prepares the children better and is more demanding than what is required in most of the public schools in which she has worked. Another teacher commented on her surprise when she brought her daughter to study at Carmen Bajo (she wanted her daughter to be at the same school in which she taught). Her daughter had been an honor student at an elite, private school in Quito before studying at Carmen Bajo. Yet, when she joined her class in Carmen Bajo, the girl was behind most of the students in her Carmen Bajo class. She had to catch up rapidly in order to keep pace with the program of instruction. A third teacher indicated that she had worked in a public school the year before and that the third level students at the public school (our second grade) still could not read while the second level students at Carmen Bajo (our first grade) could read and write well. It is important to remember that we would normally describe the type of children who attend Carmen Bajo as educationally, economically and socially disadvantaged, yet they are working at the level of children from advantaged backgrounds.

We were able to witness ways in which the children were far ahead of many of their counterparts in other schools and even to children in the United States. In a kindergarten class (in this school called Primero de Básica), children dictated two syllable words to each other and the other children had to write the words down in their notebooks. In a second grade class (called Tercero at the school), the children provided the rules of capitalization in Spanish and then wrote various sentences to demonstrate their knowledge of these rules. They then helped the teacher prepare an organizational chart of the capitalization rules with examples for each rule. The fifth grade children (called Sexto), knowledgeably discussed the characteristics of the geography, flora and fauna found on the Galapagos Islands, without making reference to any printed material. They had previously done research on the topic and were able to remember the details without notes or a book.

Another aspect that impressed us was the children’s handwriting and meticulously kept notebooks. At another meeting with a group of Ecuadorian private school teachers we learned that for decades the children in Ecuador were well trained in penmanship. However, they added, the teaching of this prized skill is now being ignored in many schools. This is not happening at Carmen Bajo. The children are encouraged to write carefully and beautifully. The teachers demand that they keep their class notes in their notebooks spotless and well organized. The children often copy the information from the board by color-coding the information as their teachers do on the board—one color for main ideas, another for examples, etc. To insure the notebooks actually stay clean and attractive, the parents cover the children’s notebooks twice—once with a colorful paper and then with a plastic cover.

In addition to the usual classes most Ecuadorian students are required to study, the Director of the school wishes that the children at Carmen Bajo become bilingual by the time they graduate from the school. In order to make this a reality, children are taught English at all grade levels, including pre-kindergarten. English language posters, sayings, and Bible verses are posted in most classrooms along with the regular Spanish ones. The computer lab provides the children with additional English

language programs to reinforce the language skills taught in class. The programs provide the children with examples of native English language speakers, something they lack since their English teacher is an Ecuadorian who has a strong accent when speaking English. The computer programs also help the students learn computer usage skills. We were told that the public schools might offer two hours of English a week, whereas the Carmen Bajo children study English classes every day and they reinforce those times when they are in the computer labs by working with the English language computer programs.

The integration of faith and learning is evident at all levels in the school. This is the most positive thing we were able to notice. All teachers feel free to give examples from the Bible or Christian perspectives in their lessons. One of the strengths a teacher mentioned about the A Beka series is its Christian perspective in all lessons and worksheets.

As in most schools, not everything is perfect, although Mr. Solá would like to strive for perfection. Though most of the teachers at the school praise the use of the A Beka books, there is a concern that the program might be too demanding for some students. The program requires the students and teachers to work through the material quickly in order to cover all the material included in the textbook. The teachers have found that some children, especially those who have learning disabilities and those who are new to the school and haven't come up the grades with this demanding program of study, find it difficult to catch up to the other students. So, in a way, the strength of the academic program may be a point of concern for students who cannot keep up. An additional concern with the A Beka program is that the teachers find it does not develop critical thinking skills, something they would like to emphasize.

- **The quality of the teaching staff:**

In the five days we spent at Carmen Bajo, we were able to perceive that the teachers and staff at the school are dedicated people who care about the students and their lives. Teachers in Ecuador are not paid very well; the teachers at Carmen Bajo are no exception--they get paid less than those in other public and private schools. In fact, when interviewed, a number of them said this was a very important concern in their lives and a fact which would determine if they stayed at the school. Two teachers admitted that they were having problems making ends meet and might not be able to stay in the school; they were saddened by this. However, even with this drawback, all the teachers were happy to be working at the school. They praised their relationship with the administration, the camaraderie among staff and teachers, and the Christian atmosphere at the school.

The teachers, because of their Christian commitment and views, show an obvious love and regard for the children. This is even evident in the ways in which they discipline the children. They never lose their tempers or yell at the children, no matter how badly a child may be acting. Instead, they quietly pull the misbehaving child to the front of the classroom (and to the side) and have him/her stand there looking at the class. The teacher does not humiliate the child verbally. In fact, nothing is said to the child to bring more attention to him/her. The teacher goes on teaching the class as if nothing has happened. After a few minutes, the teacher sends the child back into his/her seat.

The teachers recently participated in a workshop that offered ideas on how to get the class back into order. We witnessed some of the teachers using rhythmic clapping as a way to get the children's attention; this worked well with the smaller children. We also witnessed a teacher getting her students to pay attention and calm down by referring to a discipline chart. As she pointed to the different discipline expectations on the chart, the children would comply. In a matter of seconds the children were quiet and sitting obediently. We also saw a teacher having the children do some in-place exercises to allow the children to stretch and move their bodies before starting a new lesson. It is obvious that they are implementing what they learn in these professional improvement workshops.

We were able to see all the teachers at the school deliver a class or two, including the English teacher. We found that all of the teachers implemented different teaching strategies such as deductive learning, using concrete examples to emphasize a point, inclusion of all learning styles—

visual, tactile, auditory and often kinesthetic— to deliver new information, and use of concept and organizational charts. We also found that most of the teachers were well aware of their children's learning process and could tell if the children were ready or not to receive new information. When they found the students needed additional practice or explanations, they provided them.

- **Children receive strong Christian training:**

As mentioned above, the children at the school at Carmen Bajo are immersed in a Christian atmosphere. It surrounds them in the classroom and hallways by means of posters and Bible verses decorating the areas. They pray before meals, when the school day begins, etc. Their textbooks are written from a Christian perspective, using Christian and biblically related material. All the teachers and staff members are strong, fervent Christians, who speak freely and openly of their beliefs and faith in God. The children learn songs and games with Christian messages. They even greet someone coming into the classroom by saying: "Good morning, teacher. God bless you."

The children themselves are friendly, affectionate and kind. We noticed in a number of cases that when another child in the classroom was lacking supplies such as an eraser, pencil, or pencil sharpener, the other children would kindly and generously offer their supplies to the needy child. There was no feeling of possessiveness but of openness to sharing. Although we witnessed one or two scuffles, for the most part, the children treated each other kindly and with respect. The love of Jesus Christ is definitely alive in this school!

Highest priorities in order to fulfill the school's mission:

Even with the excellent work going on at Carmen Bajo, there are a number of needs that must be met for the school to continue to provide the quality education and Christian outreach mission it has provided to date.

- **The school needs more space in order to expand.**

With two third grade classes moving up to the next level (fourth grade) and the sixth grade moving on to seventh grade, two new classrooms must be added immediately. The only way to get this needed space is by using the administrative office and the materials room; these can be converted into two classrooms. What then will happen with the office and the materials room which is often used as a work area for the school accountants and as a meeting room? Where will they be relocated? This is the immediate dilemma faced by the director of the school, Mr. Solá. Whatever solution the administration implements, it will only be a stopgap measure. Additional new classrooms (up to 15 if the school expects to have two sections of each grade) will be needed in the future. This means that a new building must be built to house these new classrooms. It would be wise to house the lower grades in one building and the upper grades in another.

It is **essential to add two new classrooms through high-school** since the students will undoubtedly be too well prepared to attend the local public high schools. We strongly urge the Foundation to consider buying new land and slowly building these new classrooms, a few classrooms at a time, if necessary. The future looks bright for these students and the community. Mr. Solá has already contacted the administrators of a local university who are willing to consider bringing a satellite evening program to the Carmen Bajo community so that the local, qualified residents can pursue higher education. The classes might even meet in the Carmen Bajo school building. The graduates of the Carmen Bajo school would be the prime candidates for such a program. They would be the best prepared in the neighborhood to be successful in such a program. It would allow them to work during the day to help their families and continue their university studies in the evenings.

The addition of this new building means other needs must be addressed. The school must hire another principal to work with the high school students. The services of a guidance counselor will also be needed to help the students make decisions for their future; this could be a part-time position. The educational psychologist (discussed below) may have additional duties, also, since older students

often have bigger and more difficult problems with which they struggle. In addition to the new classrooms, another cafeteria will be needed for the older students.

- The school needs to **find a better place to house the day-care centers** or be able to fix the rented facilities they are using. Although the day-care rooms may be better than what most babies and toddlers experience in their own homes, the rooms in which they are housed are drearier than the school classrooms. Mr. Solá has promised to work on these rooms as soon as possible. However, if the new building were to be constructed, the administration might be able to move the nurseries into facilities owned by the Foundation, where changes and improvements can be implemented more easily. This is another reason why we urge the Foundation to consider building additional facilities in Carmen Bajo.
- Mr. Solá needs to be free to raise money for the other Foundation projects and the future projects being planned. Therefore, it is essential that **a new principal/director must be hired**. This person must be an educator and a seasoned administrator as there are many documents and rules that must be followed to comply with the requirements demanded by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. In addition, because of the school's bilingual focus, this administrator must also be able to speak and write in English. It may also be necessary to hire an administrative director with accounting background to help the new principal/director if s/he does not have this training. The monthly financial reports required by the Ecuadorian government make this task difficult and time consuming.
- If the administrators and teachers want the students to be bilingual, **native or native-like proficient English language teachers** should be hired to teach English to the children. Although the current English teacher is doing a good job, she lacks the spoken English proficiency to help the children acquire better pronunciation and proficiency in the language. Another possible solution would be to provide this English teacher with more training in the English language and contact with native-English speaking people so that her own skills develop and grow.
- **Testing procedures** must be put in place to assess the learning skills of each child coming into the school. **Learning disabilities must be detected as soon as possible**. This lack of professional testing seems to be a problem in most of the public schools in Ecuador. It seems that little is done to meet the needs of special-needs children.
- **Specialized teachers are needed to teach the children with learning disabilities**. None of the current teachers are prepared to offer the help some of these students need. If no teachers can be found, and we were told this is a serious problem, the school should not admit these students and should encourage the parents to send them to schools where their special needs can be met. For the time being, these students are being mainstreamed into the regular classroom and little special help is being provided. The teachers simply cannot adequately provide individual help to these students with all of the other demands placed on them and without the training needed to offer this help.
- **An educational psychologist** should be hired to work with some of the children who are living through some difficult situations in their home life or private life. The teachers indicated that a number of children are suffering mental, physical and sexual abuse and need help working through some of these traumas. They also mentioned that a number of the students are incredibly aggressive and difficult to control due to an internalized anger they cannot dispel.
- **Better physical education training, facilities and equipment** are needed if the children are to develop healthy and strong bodies. This may be a reality in the near future as the government is planning to develop a park area next to the school where the students would be able to practice their sports. Mr. Solá is hoping he can purchase some land adjacent to the school and next to this planned park in order to have more control and private use of the green areas and sports facilities. Sports and playground equipment will be needed for these areas.

- The new building should include **a library**. In the meantime, Mr. and Mrs. Solá are encouraging the teachers to set up individual classroom libraries. It would be a good idea to contact publishing companies in the US, such as Scholastic Books and the Spanish publisher Santillana, to ask for donations per grades. Scholastic Books is very generous in helping deprived communities. Scholastic also has a number of bilingual books. Another suggestion might be the creation of a mobile library so that the whole community can have access to numerous books. We are not sure how this would work, however. Mr. Solá fears vandalism and theft might hamper such a project.
- An effort should be made to include **Ecuadorian civics training in the curriculum**. This would teach the children to be good Ecuadorian citizens—stressing the values, character, history and heritage of the Ecuadorian peoples. One of the teachers found this lacking in the curriculum of most schools in the city, but especially at Carmen Bajo since the focus on academic excellence does not allow the teachers much time to develop this important aspect of a person's life—national identity and responsible citizenship.
- A number of the teachers suggested that **workshops for parents** are a real need in the community. These workshops would include topics such as disciplining techniques that do not include corporal punishment, instructing parents on their role in their child's educational experience, explaining to young parents what their responsibilities are towards their children, etc.

Professional development needs of the faculty:

Having interviewed most of the teachers at the school, their professional development needs were made clear. Here is a list of the professional workshops the teachers would like to receive. Interestingly, Mr. and Mrs. Solá have already planned for a number of these workshops to be presented to the teachers:

- Workshops on innovative methods to deliver instruction. [This workshop is already planned for the summer of 2008]
- Workshops on innovative ways to discipline children [Also planned for the summer of 2008]
- Methods to better plan for classes (creating and writing better learning objectives and lesson plans)
- Workshops on new ways to help students develop better reading and writing skills.
- Training in how to teach sex education. [The teachers at another Christian school in the area are writing textbooks on this subject, developed sequentially for the different grade levels, and have promised to give the books to Mr. Solá for use at Carmen Bajo].
- Workshops on arts and crafts for elementary school children.
- Workshops on how to help children develop critical thinking skills.
- Workshops on multiple intelligences and how to target each in the classroom.
- Training on how to help students develop social skills—manners, conflict resolution, etc.
- Training on how to help students develop emotional intelligence—self-control, kindness, etc.
- Training on how to use innovative technology in the classroom well (computers, television, use of Smart Boards, etc.—no classrooms have access to Smart Boards at this time)

We suggest that as soon as possible **a workshop be given on collaborative/cooperative learning in the classroom**. We believe this is essential. Dr. David Well from Alliance Academy International mentioned that some of the teachers at Alliance can deliver this workshop because they are experienced at using cooperative learning in their own classrooms successfully. These teachers would be quite effective because they speak Spanish and can be consulted easily should questions arise after the workshop.

In addition to teacher training, the **teachers' aides need to be trained** to understand their role in the classroom. What exactly is their role? How are they to help the students and the teacher? How can they help with discipline in the classroom? These and other questions should be covered in the training session. This training is essential if the aides are going to be effective and not just another adult body in the classroom, as was the case in some classrooms we visited.

We also propose that some time be set aside (every two weeks, if possible) for teachers to come together and share their concerns or frustrations and offer solutions to common problems. The teachers have very little free time in which to do this during the school day, which begins before 8 o'clock in the morning and often ends around 5 p.m. due to after school programs which they often have to supervise.

We believe, based on the teacher interviews, that the learning curve is high for new teachers, so a **mentoring program for new teachers** should be put in place to help them be effective in this demanding school. This could be something like a “buddy system” for teachers. It seems to us that most school teachers in Ecuador would have a difficult time adjusting to the rhythm and requirements of the Carmen Bajo school.

Based on what we were able to see, the teachers of Carmen Bajo take to heart any training they get and implement it in their classrooms. We saw this in the areas of the many discipline techniques, for example, which they implemented after they received a short training on the subject. With this level of commitment to experiment and implement new ideas, we believe any training they receive will benefit the children and the school of Carmen Bajo.

Other needs:

- Though this may seem insignificant, it became obvious to us that the teachers are in need of a number of things almost immediately. The teachers use masking tape for everything, but since the white boards are slick and the cement walls are often cold to the touch, their materials are constantly falling off. This problem interrupts the flow and delivery of the lesson being given. Therefore, we recommend the following items be purchased:
 1. **Full-length “map rails” with cork inserts and hooks** to be installed over every white board. This will allow the teacher to hang or tack their posters, maps, and/or pocket charts.
 2. **More cork bulletin boards** for every classroom.
 3. **Marker/eraser trays** under each whiteboard. [These can be built easily with simple strips of wood]
 4. If possible, exchange the current whiteboards for **magnetic whiteboards** so that the teachers can use magnets to hold up their paper-strips of information easily. The teachers tend to use brightly colored paper to prepare examples of what they are teaching. These also are adhered to the whiteboards with masking tape and continually fall off. If the cost of this is prohibitive, we suggest that each teacher be given a metallic sheet (the size of a poster) that can be hooked on the map rail mentioned above, so that it serves the same purpose.
- **Additional pocket charts** for each teacher.
- **More arts and crafts materials for the children and training** on different projects for each grade level. During the whole week we were in the school, we only saw two groups, the pre-kindergarten classes, working with any craft materials, and these were used to teach another point altogether. The craft itself was not the project's purpose. We believe this training would help children with artistic abilities develop these. It may be the only outlet a gifted child will have to use these talents.
- There is a need for **more educational materials such as books, audiovisual materials (films, musical CDs)**, among others. We especially encourage the Foundation to provide CDs of music that include body movements in the singing of the songs, especially for the teaching of English. Most children will remember the words and gestures to these songs for years to come. The books—fiction and non-fiction alike—might encourage the children to develop a love of reading which is not customary in the lives of most Ecuadorian people, according to the Ecuadorian teachers with which we interacted at another setting (most of these women were from the middle or upper-middle class).

Summary statements:

In summary, we find that the Centro Educativo Amor y Esperanza located in the Carmen Bajo neighborhood of Quito, Ecuador, is doing a very good job in delivering instruction and fulfilling its mission in the community. The school is administered well, the teachers are enthusiastic and effective, and the children are prospering socially and academically, in most cases far above their peers attending different schools. We were impressed by the school, its facilities, and its efforts to provide children with a safe, clean and healthy environment in which to work and study. We were encouraged by the dedication, love and sacrificial spirit of the administrators, teachers and staff at the school. The objectives of the school administrators are to provide the children with a quality Christian education, and we believe they are doing so.

It is our opinion, based on observations (though brief), conversations with teachers who have worked in the public schools, and on conversations with other Ecuadorian teachers, that the quality of instruction, educational materials, Christian training, and physical conditions the children experience at the Centro Educativo Amor y Esperanza surpass anything they would encounter in the public schools of the country.

No doubt that the school has to overcome some challenges such as finding new facilities, overcoming financial trials, and finding sponsors for the children, but the administrators' positive spirit and faith in God as Provider allow them to infuse the teachers and children with a sense of hope and positive outlook.

We were blessed to have the opportunity to visit and evaluate the school and its workers. We would love to do it again!