



PERKIN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOUNDATION, INC

# NEWSLETTER DICEMBER 2011

## *End of school-year 2011....Preparation for 2012*

The 2011 school year at Amún Shéa, Center for Integrated Development, came to a close on November 30 with the Kindergarten graduation and the handing out of report cards for the 120 students from pre-kinder through sixth grade. Preparation for 2012 with classes beginning the 17<sup>th</sup> of January has begun, with summer school introductory courses for new students and the program planning for the coming year, which includes advancing to seventh grade. Admissions for 2012 are in the 150-160 range.

### Problem Based Learning through Projects

The 2011 school year saw the advancement in program development through the implementation of projects focused on problems pertinent to local and regional economic and social issues; issues identified by the students and their families as important to address. The projects developed during the year were:



#### Kindergarten:

- The Five Senses
- Types of Housing: scale models of wood, block and adobe homes
- Plants
- Vegetables and their Benefits

#### First Grade:

- Story-Telling: each student elaborated an original story with illustrations
- Accident Prevention: Design and construction of a safety barrier for a ravine at the school
- Indigenous Customs and Traditions of Morazán
- Mathematics of Life: Platonic Forms, Fibonacci Sequence, Flower of Life



#### Second Grade:

- Vegetable Growing and its Benefits
- Natural and Man-made Disasters
- Potable Water Treatment and Rational Use of Water
- Rational Use of Land: Master plan design for Amún Shéa campus growth



Scale model of Amún Shéa property with proposed layout

### Third Grade:

- Theater: A Day a School, addressing student-teacher communication, discipline, etc
- Family Budget: Basic Needs, Priorities and Planning
- Role of the Media in Childhood Education
- Rational Use of Natural Resources: Three proposals for an eco-friendly development of a plot of rustic land adjacent the school



### Fourth Grade:

- Food Additives and their effect on Health
- Global Warming
- Rediscovering Lenca Culture
- Disconnecting the Grid: Alternative Energies



**Noteworthy:** scale models with working solar, water and wind powered energy

### Fifth Grade:

- Global Warming
- Professional and Technical positions in the Salvadoran labor market
- Solid Waste Treatment in Perquín
- Food Security: Vegetable growing for the Amún Shéa 2012 school year, demand, planting schedule, costs and return



### Sixth Grade:

- Investigation on Potable Water in Perquín
- Psychological and Biological changes in Adolescents
- Consumer Education
- Young Businesspeople: Individual business plans



**Noteworthy:** The Water Investigation made a full-page report in a national newspaper, Several business plans will be implemented by students and their families and the Changes in Adolescents project resulted in the production of a movie, which may be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/user/AmunSheaSchool>



# Results and Lessons Learned 2008 - 2011

Many visitors to Amún Shéa comment on the openness, self-confidence and assertiveness of our students. We attribute that to the emphasis on the *Learning Process* as opposed to the *Teaching Program*. All students do a written synthesis of the day's activities rather than copying subject matter into notebooks. The projects based on issues pertinent to their communities create out-of-school conversations with parents and peers which enrich the process. We deem it essential that obtained knowledge must be expressed or presented in order to be considered "learned". This is greatly enhanced by the investigative element of the projects which entails interviews with local authorities, as well as the ever-growing opportunity to express themselves on the local radio and cable television stations. The role of the arts in this process is key, as well access to technology and software which may assist in developing presentations.

We have found a weakness in the implementation of the learning process: the lack of preparation of the teaching staff in technical fields. We do have a committed staff and with very good intentions, nevertheless their own formation was limited to teaching basic educational subjects. This year we relied heavily on parents and friends in the professional fields of architecture, engineering, accounting and electronics. As we move forward, we will be increasingly seeking professional input. We have talked with the Education Ministry of the possibility of establishing a teaching accreditation course at Amún Shéa for interested professionals, as we do foresee that need, not only with our program but within the public system as well.

Our program has caught the attention of the Education Ministry, not only as a novelty as it may have been seen at startup, but now as a proposal to be taken seriously. At their request we have begun initial talks regarding fusing with the neighboring public school and implementing our program as a pilot for modification within the public system. This is gratifying and would increase our influence on positive change within the education process of the region, but does require a lot of preparation, work and sensitive negotiation.

## Preparation 2012

On the basis of the lessons learned and the goal of assisting in the formation of persons capable of bringing a positive change in the social and economic conditions within the region, we have developed a general theme per grade within which projects and activities will be developed according to interest and vision of the students and their families and have elaborated a new capacity evaluation or grading system:

### General Theme per Grade

Kindergarten: Me and My Surroundings

First Grade: Ecosystem

Second Grade: Complex Biodiversity

Third Grade: Rational Use and Management of Biodiversity

Fourth Grade: Renewable Energies

Fifth Grade: Technological Production

Sixth Grade: Environmental Industries

Seventh Grade: Local Development

### Capacities

#### Knowledge:

- Mathematics
- Science

#### Creativity:

- Expression
- Analysis

#### Responsibility:

- Respect and Coexistence
- Participation

# *Financial Budget 2012*

The operating budget for Amún Shéa in 2012 comes out to an estimated USD 270,000. The cost per student is USD 150 per month, including nutrition, materials, teaching staff and school administration. The agreement reached with the parents in the November assembly establishing the contribution of the families at USD 50 per student. There are exceptions to this, of course, given the economic situation in Morazán, but those exceptions will be covered by in-kind and work contributions. USD 50 is a considerable investment for the families of our students and shows the commitment they have in seeing the continuation and growth of the program, which they have reached given the notable results obtained by their children.

Natural program expansion and student population growth do require an investment during 2012 of USD 120,000 in infrastructure and another USD 60,000 in equipment.



## *Contributions*

*We wish to thank those who have generously supported the Amún Shéa program through these four years; it has made possible the results now being obtained. We continue working towards long-term stability and establishing relationships that will help sustain the projected growth of the program, but in the meanwhile we do depend on your investment and support.*

*Please consider continuing your financial support or making a new commitment to this important educational program which will have a long-term positive impact on the families in northern Morazán.*

*Your contribution is tax-exemptible: **PERKIN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOUNDATION INC.**  
2354 Sue Ann Dr.  
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Please be assured that **100%** of your donation will go to the Amún Shéa Program  
For more information: [www.peofoundation.org](http://www.peofoundation.org)