

Welcome to Ometepe Bilingual School!

We are the first free-of-charge, privately-owned bilingual school in Central America, and one of only a few bilingual schools in Nicaragua.

At Ometepe we believe that education is of utmost importance for a more prosperous and brighter future. Today's children are tomorrow's leaders, and our goal is to provide them with the education and language skills needed to expand their future opportunities.

Our school has its roots in English classes for adults begun in the summer of 2007. Classes were taught in the open-air restaurant of our hotel. One of our biggest challenges was a lack of continuity due to a limited number of volunteer teachers.

Today some of our first students have successfully completed weekend English courses at Ave Maria University in Rivas (<http://www.keiseruniversity.edu/san-marcos.php>) and are using their English skills in the local tourism industry. Hacienda Merida continues to support community members on their educational path, and provides funding for courses at Ave Maria University and travel expenses to and from Rivas.

2013 has been the most exciting year for us so far. Ometepe Bilingual School opened its first eco-friendly classroom, built from plastic waste and sustainable earth-bag technology. [see more details here: <http://www.hmerida.com/english/projectdetails/19>]

Our new classroom is a result of our plastic reuse program. Since 2008 we have been encouraging the local community to collect plastic bottles and fill them with non-degradable trash such as plastic bags. Hacienda Merida pays 20¢ USD for each filled bottle. We have received more than three tons of these plastic bottles, and have used them to build our classroom, and for other projects, including tables and chairs for our local public school and for Hacienda Merida.

The re-use of plastic waste serves two purposes: it reduces the amount of concrete and other non-sustainable building materials that would otherwise need to be imported to Ometepe at great cost, and it sequesters plastic waste to prevent it from entering the lake or contaminating the environment. Ometepe has no recycling or trash collection services, and local people would otherwise burn the plastic waste, or leave it lying on the ground.

Plans for 2014 and beyond are even more exciting!

In September 2014 Ometepe Bilingual School will welcome 12 students to its first elementary school class. Ometepe Bilingual School participates in the One Laptop Per Child Initiative of the Zamora Teran Foundation, and each new student will receive their own laptop computer.

We are currently seeking an English-speaking teacher for a one year volunteer commitment to our school. It is a perfect opportunity to enjoy interesting work in a beautiful location, and to receive subsidized accommodations at Hotel Hacienda Merida and food in our excellent restaurant!

Over the next six years we plan to construct five more eco-friendly classrooms from plastic waste, transforming an empty field by the lakeshore into a fully-functioning bilingual school for 72 students. And Hacienda Merida will continue to provide a free breakfast for every child attending the school, and to financially support advanced educational opportunities for promising students.

Please visit our YouTube Channel <http://www.youtube.com/user/haciendamerida> for more information, school history and many other exciting projects at Hacienda Merida.

Photos of our school and community are below.



Ometepe Bilingual School is the first free-of-charge, privately owned public school in Central America



We work in close association with the local public school and Ministry of Education



The school follows the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education curriculum along with its own teaching techniques.



Ometepe Bilingual School receives ongoing support from Hotel Hacienda Merida and is located on its grounds.



Children have breakfast together before their classes



Our school welcomes English-speaking volunteers who receive subsidized accommodation and food in exchange.
<http://www.omprakash.org/>



During the first five years of our plastic reuse program, we have collected more than 18,000 trash-filled plastic bottles, with a total weight of more than three tons.



We use the bottles to construct classrooms, tables, chairs, and other infrastructure for the Ometepe Bilingual School and the local public school



The classroom is constructed using plastic bottles and earth-bag technology. The earth bags are used as structural columns for the roof, and the bottles are used to fill in between the earth bag columns.

More information on our website, and other links below:

Bilingual School Proposal <http://www.hmerida.com/english/projectdetails/19>

Importance of Education <http://www.hmerida.com/english/projects/education>

Volunteer for us! (<http://www.hmerida.com/english/projectdetails/10>)

Reasons behind our initiative (<http://www.hmerida.com/english/projectdetails/22>)

Related links and articles:

One Laptop per person Initiative by Zamora Teran Foundation

http://infosurhoy.com/en_GB/articles/saii/features/society/2013/07/30/feature-02

Zamora Teran Foundation website: <http://www.fundacionzt.org/>