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**EXCELENCIA Quarterly Report**  
October 1, 2006 – December 31, 2006



Submitted by:

**American Institutes for Research**

With:

**Academy for Educational Development  
Save the Children Federation, USA**

U.S. Agency for International Development  
Cooperative Agreement No. GDG-A-00-03-00006-00

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Title of the Project: Expansion of Centers of Excellence in Nicaragua with Emphasis on the APA Methodology (EXCELENCIA)

Principal Contractor: American Institutes for Research (AIR)

Associates: Academy for Educational Development (AED)  
Save the Children Federation USA

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Official Contact  
For the Contractors: Nancy McDonald  
Project Manager  
1000 Thomas Jefferson St. NW  
Washington, DC 20007  
Tel. 202 403-5524  
Fax 202 403-5979  
Email: [nmcdonald@air.org](mailto:nmcdonald@air.org)

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## ACRONYMS

<b>AED</b>	Academy for Educational Development
<b>AIR</b>	American Institutes for Research
<b>ALIANZAS</b>	Strategic Alliances for Social Investment
<b>APA</b>	Aprendo, Pratico, Aplico
<b>BASE</b>	Basic Education and Training Program II
<b>COP</b>	Chief of Party
<b>CTO</b>	Cognizant Technical Officer
<b>EIB</b>	Educación Intercultural Bilingüe
<b>EQUIP</b>	Education Quality Improvement Program
<b>EXCELENCIA</b>	Expansión de los Centros de Excelencia en Nicaragua con Énfasis en el Método APA (Aprendo, Practico y Aplico)
<b>FADCANIC</b>	Fundación para la Autonomía y Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica Nicaraguense
<b>MECD</b>	Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deportes
<b>PEBI</b>	Program in Bilingual Education
<b>PDE</b>	Educational Development Plans
<b>PRONICASS</b>	Programa Nicaraguense de Apoyo al Sector Social
<b>SO</b>	Strategic Objective
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>RAAN</b>	Region Autónoma del Atlántico Norte
<b>RAAS</b>	Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXCELENCIA's work this quarter's centered on evaluating activities implemented over the past project year and with planning activities for the next project year. The EXCELENCIA team reviewed lessons learned gained through expanding the network of schools emphasizing the importance of maintaining the quality of the intervention while expanding the number of schools reached by the project. At the same time, EXCELENCIA has incorporated changes identified through the validation of the materials produced for the new competencies-based curriculum. The national and local workshops and meetings of the EXCELENCIA network continued. For example, EXCELENCIA held meetings where teachers, parents and students exchanged experiences and identified best practices and sponsored evaluation and planning meetings with local delegates and pedagogical advisors.

By the end of 2006, EXCELENCIA exceeded both the target number of schools to be incorporated into the network and the indicators referring to the number of people trained in techniques that strengthen educational quality. A total of 1,120 schools currently form part of the EXCELENCIA network and the project's network now reaches 144 municipalities, representing 95% of the country's municipalities. In this quarter, EXCELENCIA trained 5,695 people bringing the total for the year to 22,106, thus exceeding the goal of 20,211 people proposed for 2006.

EXCELENCIA also installed four new Resource Centers this quarter and acquired equipment to install five more. On the Atlantic Coast, EXCELENCIA sub-contractor FADCANIC successfully initiated operations targeting a total of 90 schools. EXCELENCIA supported FADCANIC's work by organizing various training workshops for their personnel. EXCELENCIA has made significant progress in incorporating the results from the validation of the educational materials into the new competencies-based curriculum. The project expects to submit the definitive results to the MECD during the first quarter of 2007.

Under Result 3, EXCELENCIA completed the first *Estudio Anual de Investigación 2006* (Annual Study) researching the mentor schools program, their role within the network with the purpose of identifying the factors that make a successful mentor school and hence the expansion of the APA method successful. In support of the transitions to primary study, Save the Children completed their desk study on "*La Transición Exitosa al Primer Grado, un Factor Clave para el Desarrollo Infantil Temprano*" ("The Successful Transition to First Grade: a Key Factor for Early Childhood Development"), which addresses measures to be taken by the home, school, community and state to ensure a successful transition from preschool education to primary education. The results of this research were presented at the First National Forum on Education for Transition.

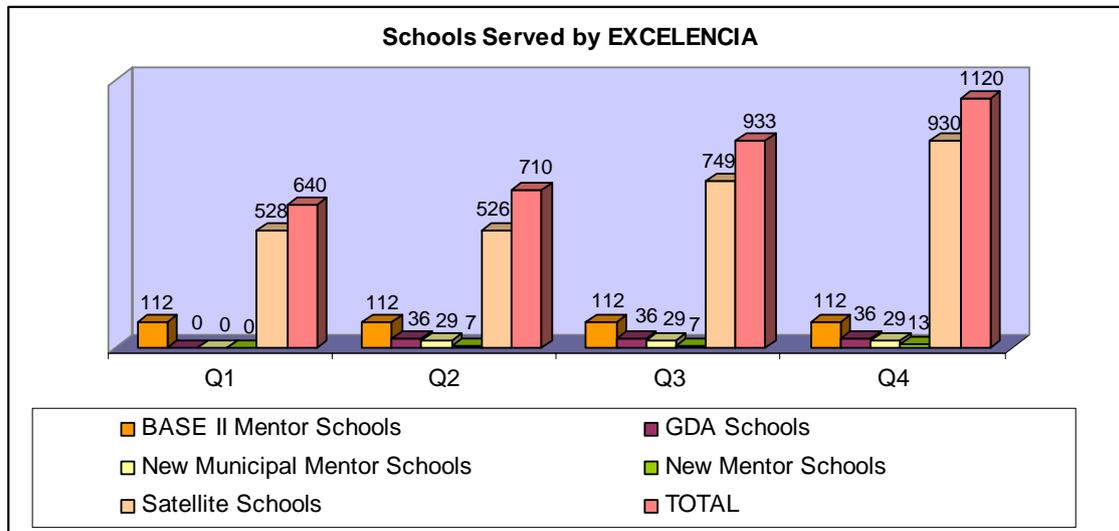
For Monitoring and Evaluation activities, EXCELENCIA has been updating the information of its indicators in accordance with the progress of the results obtained in the expansion to new schools, and USAID's contribution to the education indicators.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

### I. Result 1: Expansion of the Network of EXCELENCIA schools applying the APA methodology

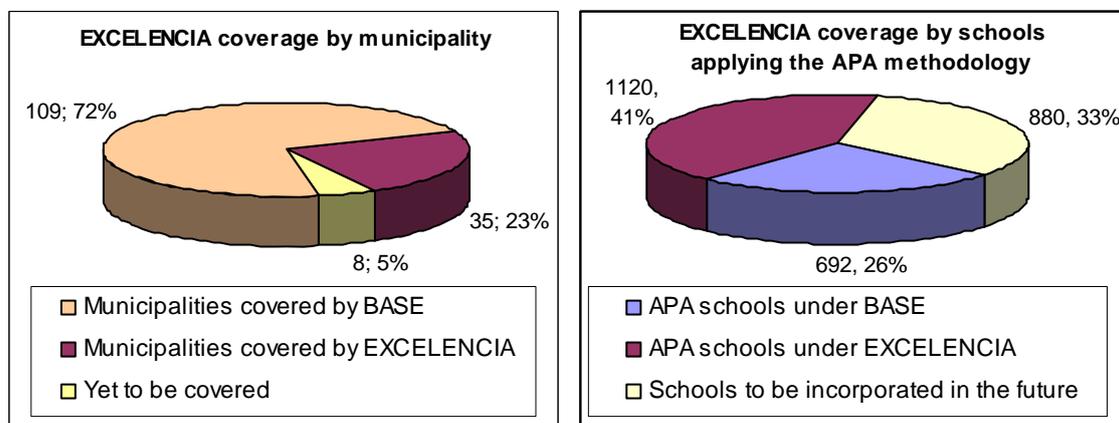
#### A) EXPANSION OF SCHOOLS NETWORK

During this quarter, EXCELENCIA facilitators incorporated 187 new schools into the network, for a total of 1,120 schools. This number represents a 75% increase above the number of schools incorporated at the start of the project (640) and a 103% fulfillment of the target established for December 2006 (1,092).

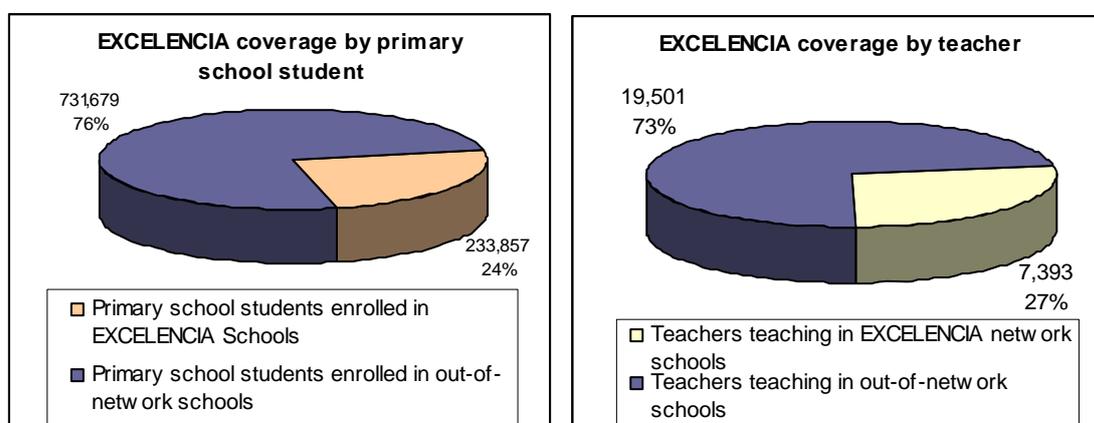


Source: EXCELENCIA Project. December 2006

The project also began the year with a presence in 109 municipalities. By the end of 2006, EXCELENCIA increased coverage to 35 more municipalities, for a total of 144 as of December 2006 as shown in the EXCELENCIA Coverage by Municipality chart below. During this project year, EXCELENCIA expanded the number of schools applying the APA methodology from 880 to 1120 schools, exceeding our target for the year. By project's end, EXCELENCIA will reach 2,692 schools.



EXCELENCIA also reached 24% (233,857) of the 965,536 students enrolled in primary education. Of the 26,894 primary school teachers, 27% or 7,393 teach in the EXCELENCIA school network.



The charts above show the progress in the coverage of EXCELENCIA using updated data from the Directorate of Statistics of MECD. Data of number of schools and registration are changing constantly (new schools open, new students enter or leave etc.) EXCELENCIA updates constantly its national data with the Statistics Office of the MECD.

Table 1 (below) shows the expansion of a mentor schools is increasing at a rate of five expansion schools (*escuelas irradiadas*) (a minimum of three and maximum of nine, depending on the region).

Table 1: Schools served by EXCELENCIA by Department and Categories

Location	Multigrade	Multigrade Bilingual	Regular	Regular Bilingual	Total	Mentors	Satellites	Average of service
Boaco	43		18		61	6	55	9
Carazo	28		16		44	9	35	4
Chinandega	56		38		94	15	79	5
Chontales	56		18		74	10	64	6
Estelí	25		18		43	6	37	6
Granada	36		16		52	11	41	4
Jinotega	47		17		64	8	56	7
León	66		23		89	21	68	3
Madriz	52		17		69	9	60	7
Managua	29		46		75	20	55	3
Masaya	11		25		36	10	26	3
Matagalpa	75		29		104	16	88	6
Nueva Segovia	52		20		72	9	63	7
RAAN Excelencia	8		1		9	1	8	8
RAAN Fadcanic	11	18	8	18	55	12	43	4
RAAS Excelencia	22		9		31	3	28	9
RAAS Fadcanic	10	3	12	10	35	10	25	3
Rio San Juan	24		12		36	4	32	8
Rivas	48		29		77	12	65	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1120</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>928</b>	<b>5</b>

Source: EXCELENCIA.Records, December 2006

The departmental and municipal MECD advisors are fundamental actors in EXCELENCIA's expansion program. They periodically visit schools in the network and support the project's activities in them. They are aware of the results of EXCELENCIA schools in improving the educational quality – for both students and teachers. During this quarter, the advisors made a round of visits reflected in the following chart:

*Table 2. Visits to Schools carried out by Educational Advisers*

Department	# of visits	Department	# of visits
León	166	Chontales	137
Matagalpa	131	Chinandega	131
Madriz	116	Estelí	97
Managua	86	Jinotega	83
Carazo	83	Río San Juan	77
Rivas	77	Nueva Segovia	67
Boaco	62	RAAS(Rama y Muelle)	55
Granada	54	Masaya	51
RAAS (Nueva Guinea)	18		
<b>TOTAL: 1,491</b>			

Source: EXCELENCIA Records

## B) TRAINING

A total of 5,696 people (1,160 men and 4,536 women) participated in training events organized by EXCELENCIA throughout this quarter, reaching a total of 22,106 people trained during 2006. This exceeded the yearly target of 20,211 by nearly 10%.

*Table 3. Training events and people trained by EXCELENCIA in the Quarter*

Name of the activity	Female	Male	Total	Number of days
Regional Meeting of Students Governments of the new mentor schools	413	182	595	1
Regional and Departmental Meetings with Principals and Pedagogical Advisers.	291	106	397	1
Local Training Between Mentor Schools and Their Satellite Schools.	774	127	901	1
Second Technical Workshop of Multi-grade Schools.	80	18	98	2
Closing Workshop of the Validation of Regular Primary Education Curriculum.	145	28	173	2
Workshop on Production of Materials for Intercultural Bilingual Education.	22	15	37	3
Regional Meetings between Mentor Schools.	1,981	387	2,368	1
Training of the Technical Team in Charge of Validation of Guides for Learning.	10	11	21	2
Fourth Workshop for First Grade Teachers.	80	18	98	2
National Meeting of Successful Students.	260	157	417	1
Training on Pedagogical Mediation and Didactical Strategies.	66	11	77	1
Local Training Between Mentor and Satellite schools.	414	100	514	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,536</b>	<b>1,160</b>	<b>5,696</b>	

Source: EXCELENCIA Records, registration lists. December 2006

In addition to the aforementioned training sessions, EXCELENCIA offered a workshop on *Strategies to Learn to Read and Write Comprehensively*, as part of the First Forum of Education for the Transition, organized on October 27 by the subcontractor Save the Children. Forty-seven people from different non-governmental educational organizations attended and participated in this workshop.

#### C) RESOURCES CENTERS

EXCELENCIA installed four new Resources Centers in the following schools:

- Mentor School Padre Estela in Granada
- Mentor School Hermanos Salzburgo in León
- Mentor School San Miguelito in Río San Juan
- Mentor School Benjamín Zeledón in Managua

These resources centers are ready to be inaugurated in the first quarter of 2007.

#### D) STARTING OF ACTIVITIES IN THE AUTONOMOUS REGIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN COAST

Launching of EXCELENCIA in the Autonomous Regions. On October 20, the national primary education director and the political and educational authorities of RAAS/RAAN attended the official launch of EXCELENCIA in the Autonomous Regions. FADACANIC started implementing the work plan by selecting and hiring the facilitators and specialists who will promote the expansion of the active learning method and produce the educational materials for application of the competencies-based curriculum under the framework of the region's cultural and linguistic characteristics.

*Table 4. Schools served by FADCANIC in the Autonomous Regions*

Region and Municipality	Multigrade	Multigrade Bilingual	Regular	Regular Bilingual	TOTAL
<b>RAAN</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>56</b>
Bonanza	1	7	0	1	9
Prinzapolka		4	0	2	6
Puerto Cabezas		2	1	8	11
Rosita	5	4	1	2	12
Siuna	4		6		10
Waslala*					
Waspan	1	2	0	5	8
<b>RAAS</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>35</b>
Bluefields	3		8	2	13
Corn Island				2	2
Desembocadura De Rio Grande		1	1	2	4
El Rama**					
Kukrahill	5		2		7
Laguna De Perlas	2	2	1	4	9
Muelle De Los Bueyes **					
Nueva Guinea **					
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>91</b>
(*) Schools of Waslala, in the RAAN, are served directly by EXCELENCIA					
(**) Schools of these municipalities of the RAAS are served directly by EXCELENCIA					

Source: FADCANIC. December 2006

Coordination with local authorities. EXCELENCIA met with the regions' political and educational authorities to coordinate the actions of the Regional Education Plan framework. The parties agreed that EXCELENCIA will join the formal coordination arenas established for the plan's implementation. EXCELENCIA also agreed to work on the production of educational materials for third and fourth grade multi-grade schools in order to achieve greater synergy with the regions' other educational projects.

Training of Bilingual Intercultural Education Specialists. On November 20 - 22, EXCELENCIA's technical personnel held a training session on the development of EIB materials for FADCANIC's Bilingual Intercultural Education (EIB) specialists and educational authorities from RAAN/RAAS. A total of 24 people (13 men and 11 women) attended this training held in Managua.

Training sessions developed by FADCANIC in this quarter. From October 9 -13, FADCANIC conducted a series of training workshops for the participants in the preparation of the bilingual intercultural educational materials for the Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions. The objective of these workshops was to agree on methodological and technical focuses for the preparation of the EIB materials. A total of 42 people (16 men and 26 women) participated in these workshops.

On November 13, 14, 16, 17, 23 and 29, FADCANIC technicians held three training workshops with directors of mentor schools, MECD delegates and regional education authorities. The objective of these workshops was to present the project, its activities and explain the active learning method. A total of 50 people (22 men and 28 women) participated in these workshops.

*Table 5. Consolidated of Training Given by FADCANIC in the RAAN/RAAS*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Bluefields</b>		<b>Bilwi</b>		<b>Rosita</b>		<b>Total</b>	
Mentor School Directors	10		5		7		22	
Regional Delegates of MECD	4		3		3		10	
Regional Education Authorities			2				2	
Coordinators and technicians of PEBI	6		8		1		14	
EXCELENCIA and FADCANIC Technicians	14		12		5		31	
Consultants specialists in IBE	6		6				12	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>V. 8</b>	<b>M.32</b>	<b>V.23</b>	<b>M.13</b>	<b>V.7</b>	<b>M.9</b>	<b>V.38</b>	<b>M.54</b>
	<b>40</b>		<b>36</b>		<b>16</b>		<b>92</b>	

Source: FADCANIC Report. January 2006

#### E) RESULT 1 ACHIEVEMENTS.

EXCELENCIA attained and exceeded the proposed expansion target (See annexes). Despite this being a quarter complicated by political events such as the election of a new government and the end of the school year (at the end of November), EXCELENCIA implemented activities leading to the incorporation of 187 new schools and one municipality more into the EXCELENCIA network. This increase brings the project's primary enrollment coverage from 23% to 24% and its teachers from 23% to 27%.

EXCELENCIA attained and exceeded the proposed goal of people trained for the first year (See annexes). According to the project records, 22,126 people participated in

different training events organized over the course of the year, exceeding the target of 20,211 for the first year.

EXCELENCIA initiated activities on RAAN/RAAS and trained technicians who will produce the bilingual intercultural education materials. FADCANIC began implementing the project in the two Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions. The project was officially launched and has begun to produce the bilingual intercultural education materials for these regions. EXCELENCIA has established the corresponding coordination with the authorities in support of these activities.

Teachers and students of EXCELENCIA schools won national recognition (See annexes). Students and teachers participating in the EXCELENCIA network won a large percentage of the MECD prizes for best primary teachers and students. For example, best Primary Teacher at the National Level was Martha Rosa Narváez Solís from EXCELENCIA mentor school *Enmanuel Mongalo* and the Banco UNO National Award for Excellency was awarded to mentor school *Rubén Darío of Jalapa*.

Teachers from EXCELENCIA schools won nine of the 14 departmental awards for best primary teachers. Thirty-eight teachers from EXCELENCIA schools were named the best primary teachers at the municipal level. Forty-seven students from EXCELENCIA schools were named the best primary students at the municipal level; and 13 of those were named the best primary students at the departmental level. Forty-four EXCELENCIA schools won the Mathematics Olympics at the municipal level, and nine of them won the Olympics at the departmental level. Thirty-six EXCELENCIA schools won the Spanish Olympics at the municipal level, and six of them won these Olympics at the departmental level.

## **II. Result 2: New Competencies-Based Curriculum for Primary Education That Includes Bilingual Intercultural Education, Validated and Incorporated Into the National Education System**

### **A) PRODUCTION OF MATERIALS FOR THE NEW CURRICULUM**

Follow-up to the validation of the Competencies-based Curriculum. To provide follow-up to the validation of the curriculum, EXCELENCIA held two new National Meetings on October 30 and 31 with directors and teachers from the sample of schools working on the validation. A total of 181 people (149 women and 32 men) participated, while 108 people (85 women and 23 men) participated in the meeting for multi-grade primary schools, for a total of 289 participants.

EXCELENCIA built upon information gained through interviews and classroom observation of the new curriculum's materials application by contracting two advisor teams (five advisors for the visits to regular schools and 24 for the visits to multi-grade schools). These advisors visited multi-grade schools to observe a training workshop on the learning guides in support of the curriculum. The advisors made a total of 65 follow-up visits (49 to regular schools and 16 to multi-grade schools).

EXCELENCIA contracted an additional three specialists to process the information from these visits. EXCELENCIA will use the information to modify and improve the educational materials in support of the validated curriculum.

Improvement of the Competencies-Based Curriculum Materials. The materials corresponding to each regular primary grade include a *workbook* for students and a manual of *didactic suggestions* for teachers. There are 30 workbooks and 30 manuals of didactic suggestions for a total of 60 different documents. In the case of multi-grade primary, EXCELENCIA has prepared six *learning guides* for students.

In this quarter, EXCELENCIA contracted 36 specialists to incorporate the observations resulting from the validation into the new curriculum materials. The teachers have suggested considerable adjustments to the contents of the materials. The component with the most changes is Language and Literature, which teachers suggested be integrated into the first two grades with Life Sciences and Environment, Geographic Space and Social Medium.

#### B) RESULT 2 ACHIEVEMENTS

The validation process was concluded in close coordination with the MECD Curricular Development Division. EXCELENCIA has concluded the validation of the new curriculum materials in accord with the plan prepared with the MECD. The validation results indicate a high level of participation from directors, teachers and students, and very valuable suggestions for improving the educational contents and materials.

The incorporation of the materials resulting from the validation process has successfully begun. The team of 36 specialists contracted by EXCELENCIA has made considerable headway in modifying the materials for the new curriculum, which is expected to be ready in time for the new school year. Their reproduction and distribution will depend on their acceptance by the new educational authorities.

### **III. Result 3: Develop Longitudinal Studies and Other Research, to Evaluate the Impact of the Project, and Carry out Field Studies to Determine the Effective Channels for Improving the Transition into Primary Education**

#### A) FIRST ANNUAL STUDY

The EXCELENCIA research team completed the First Annual Study 2006 this quarter. The study examines factors that help a mentor school efficiently carry out its responsibility of irradiating the active learning method promoted by EXCELENCIA to its *escuelas irradiadas*. This study sought to identify factors of a successful mentor school to support the efficiency of the expansion process.

The research team selected a random sample of 34 mentor schools and 67 irradiated schools. The team interviewed directors and the pedagogical advisers, using a series of five instruments with quantitative and qualitative questions. Twenty-eight technicians and three supervisors participated in the field work, all of them previously trained and under the direction of a field coordinator.

The study shows that there is strong interest in the expansion process on behalf of the directors, teachers and parents of both the mentor and *escuelas irradiadas* and that the mentor schools are adequately prepared and organized to assume the role of expanding EXCELENCIA's active learning method. The training offered by EXCELENCIA and

sharing of experiences among the participants in the expansion process (teachers, parents and student governments) appear to be some of the most valuable tools of the overall expansion. Suggestions for improving the *irradiacion* process focus on the importance of receiving materials and more support from the MECD pedagogical advisers, as well as more training sessions on the active learning method.

In order to publicize the results of the Annual Study, EXCELENCIA is planning an event for the next quarter in which it hopes that both the national and local MECD authorities and the directors of the network's mentor schools will participate.

#### B) FOLLOW-UP TO THE PROCESS AND CONSOLIDATION OF DATA FOR THE PROJECT INDICATORS

The Monitoring & Evaluation team continued tracking indicators, processing and consolidating updated information on field activities. There is now an up-to-date database on the number of schools in the network and on enrollment in them, as well as data on their participation in the Project training sessions (see annexes).

#### C) STUDY ON THE TRANSITION TO PRIMARY EDUCATION

Save the Children finished their study on transitions to primary school: "*La Transición Exitosa al Primer Grado, Factor Clave para el Desarrollo Infantil Temprano*" and began planning the second phase of the research on transition education.

The first phase of the investigation addresses the conceptual framework and suggested steps to ensure children's successful transition to primary education. The transitions research team developed a "Record of Practices in Education in Transition" as part of this research; it includes seven interventions that are currently in use in Nicaragua and their various rates of success. The transitions team is editing the document and will publish it during the next quarter.

In order to present the results of the first investigation, EXCELENCIA held the *First Forum of Education for the Transition* in Managua on October 27. The forum was inaugurated by the Minister of Education and the participants represented the MECD and education-related national and international NGOs, as well as independent researchers in the field. Parallel to the development of the forum conferences, eight organizations individually presented their experiences in transitional education.

Save the Children developed two participatory evaluation activities: one in Chinandega, with the participation of 80 people pedagogical advisors, directors and teachers, and another with UNICEF in which 12 people with the MECD's Commission on Initial Education and representatives of national and international NGOs participated. During the final meeting, the team established guidelines for the continuation of the research study in 2007 and Save the Children has prepared an *Action Plan for the Second Phase of the Investigation*.

#### D) RESULT 3 ACHIEVEMENTS.

Finalizing of the First Annual Research Study on the Mentor Schools report. EXCELENCIA achieved the goal of finishing the annual study for 2006. EXCELENCIA is planning to publicize its results at both the central MECD level and the levels of the Project's mentor schools.

Updating of the database for following up on the Project indicators. The Monitoring & Evaluation team continued to update the project indicator database Project and those of the corresponding USAID Strategic Objective.

Finalization of the report on the first part of the Research on the Transition to Primary and publicizing of its results. Save the Children has finished the first part of the research on the Transition to Primary and publicized its results in a National Forum, the first on this important topic.

#### **IV. Other activities undertaken by the Project during this quarter**

The Minister of Education chaired the second meeting of the EXCELENCIA National Committee on November 13. During the meeting, participants reviewed project achievements during the first year of operations and exchanged ideas about work in 2007 with a new MECD administration.

EXCELENCIA's technical and directive personnel held numerous coordination meetings with the different general divisions of the MECD (General Education, Planning and Policies, Curricular Development, Primary Education, Administration, etc.) in which the project activities were jointly planned.

EXCELENCIA held coordination meetings with partner projects such as PRONICASS and ALIANZAS, as well as with private enterprise sectors such as Fundación Somos UNO. EXCELENCIA and PRONICASS analyzed the coordination mechanisms for the work in those schools in which both projects are found and for their joint work on the Educational Development Plans (PDEs). EXCELENCIA is negotiating the incorporation of a new facilitator to the EXCELENCIA team financed by Fundación Somos UNO with ALIANZAS. EXCELENCIA will incorporate the seven schools currently sponsored by the foundation would be incorporated into the EXCELENCIA network and attended completely by the facilitators of the departments in which they are located. EXCELENCIA has presented to ALIANZAS a candidate to be the new facilitator. EXCELENCIA also negotiated the development of a pilot learning project in math via Internet in eight EXCELENCIA schools with Fundación Somos UNO. The Foundation will install computer laboratories in those schools to support the schools adaption of the APA methodology. EXCELENCIA has selected and presented the schools to the foundation for its consideration.

In this quarter, EXCELENCIA also held a series of internal evaluation and planning sessions for the coming year. In preparation for the elections for the new government and their final result, the project developed a series of scenarios and strategies for the transition stage when the new MECD administration takes office.

In the administrative area, EXCELENCIA purchased equipment to establish five new Resource Centers for the coming year. The project also purchased books to strengthen the school libraries of the 168 mentor schools on the Pacific coast as well as fungible materials, 5,020 mathematical baskets and 30,000 small white boards, which EXCELENCIA will distribute to schools in the first quarter of 2007.

EXCELENCIA Director Sergio Ramírez, from AED/Washington, visited the field office from November 13 -16, to analyze technical and administrative aspects of the project.

## V. Proposed activities for the next quarter

The country's new government and the new MECD authorities will take office in the first quarter of 2007. EXCELENCIA is committed to the incorporation of the new authorities and a smooth transition to ensure the continued implementation of the project's activities. EXCELENCIA will take advantage of January and February to bring the main counterparts, departmental and municipal delegates, departmental and municipal pedagogical advisors, mentor school directors and primary teachers together to evaluate the activities of 2006 and plan future activities to expand the active learning method to 600 new schools in 2007.

EXCELENCIA will develop a similar evaluation-planning-training exercise within the project, with the participation of representatives of the central AIR and AED offices. At the same time, the project team will decide upon the Annual Research Study, the student assessment activities, and the corresponding evaluations. Following USAID authorization, EXCELENCIA will establish contacts with the MECD to explain the project's work plan. In addition, the project will establish an additional five resource centers and inaugurate another four, which were completed last year.

For *Result 1, Expansion of Educational Centers Using the APA Methodology*, EXCELENCIA, together with the local MECD authorities and the facilitators, EXCELENCIA will plan the strategy that will allow the incorporation of 600 new schools into the network. For *Result 2, Validation of Educational Materials for a New Competencies-based Curriculum*, EXCELENCIA will propose to the new authorities that it continue this validation process in order to be able to further analyze the educational materials and incorporate suggestions from the new authorities into the material development process. If EXCELENCIA is authorized, the validating work in the sample of schools already defined will continue, and the activity will be extended to all the mentor schools currently in the project's network. For *Result 3*, EXCELENCIA hopes to decide and plan the annual research study corresponding to 2007 together with the MECD authorities. The following is the EXCELENCIA training calendar for January and February:

*Table 6. EXCELENCIA training schedule*

Participants	Event	Place	Date
Department Delegates	Workshop on evaluation-training-planning	Managua	January 12, 2007
Municipal Delegates	Workshop on evaluation-training-planning	León-Matagalpa; Rivas Masaya; Managua, Chontales y Estelí	January 25, 26, 29, 2007
Department Advisers	Workshop on evaluation-training-planning	Managua	January 16, 2007
Municipal Advisors	Workshop on evaluation-training-planning	Managua	January 17-18, 2007
Principals of Mentor Schools	Workshop on evaluation-training-planning	Managua	February 6, 2007
Principals of Mentor Schools and resource center personnel	Planning of the Use of Resources Centers	Managua	February 7, 2007
First Grade Mentor School Teachers	Workshop on Early Learning of Reading and Writing	Managua	February 12-13, 2007



## FIRST PERSON

### Interactive Classroom Learning Leads to Student Achievement

Promoting classroom participation and group study gives students a stake in their learning



Photo: Proyecto EXCELENCIA

Alejandro Enrique Téllez is a student and a member of the student government at the Tomás Martínez Martínez School, a mentor school in the USAID-funded EXCELENCIA School Network.

Alejandro Enrique Téllez is a typical boy who enjoys reading and surfing the Internet. Like many students, he finds math fairly difficult but through new teaching methods sponsored by USAID, Alejandro now has the tools to meet this challenge and excel at his studies.

Alejandro is a student of Tomás Martínez Martínez School, a mentor school in the EXCELENCIA School Network. Through funds provided by USAID, Alejandro’s teachers receive training on interactive classroom techniques that promote teamwork and student participation in the classroom. Alejandro believes that the way he and his fellow students now study in class, such as working together on group research projects, has helped improve his academic performance.

Putting the new techniques to the test, Tomás Martínez Martínez School entered the Ministry of Education competition to recognize the best students from the country’s different municipalities and departments. Alejandro came in first in the municipal and departmental competitions beating out 38 other students representing different schools. “It wasn’t easy,” he says humbly, “the other contestants were very strong and very well prepared, but I had also studied hard and had prepared myself under the direction of my teacher, Francis Rizo. In the end, this preparation and a bit of luck helped me win.”

Alejandro’s commitment to learning goes beyond his own personal advancement. Alejandro studies with other students outside of the classroom and as the secretary of his school and a member of the student government, he has set the goal of improving the school center’s environmental conditions.



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**NICARAGUA**

## CASE STUDY

### Student-centered teaching improves educational quality

**I learn, I practice, I apply – a simple yet comprehensive learning model motivates both students and teachers**



Photo: Proyecto EXCELENCIA

**“EXCELENCIA has triggered teachers’ interest in upgrading their skills and improving educational quality,” states Yelba María SobalBarro, Departmental Delegate, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports**

From 1993 to 2001, Nicaragua has successfully increased primary school enrollment from approximately 76% to 83%. Yet, despite this increase, there are startling statistics that show of the 100 children who begin primary schooling, only 50 complete it, and of those 50 only 20 go on to complete secondary education.

With funds from USAID, the EXCELENCIA Project and its predecessor, BASE (Basic Education and Training Project), have been working in Nicaragua for over 13 years, fine tuning creative learning models and encouraging parents and the community at large to take an active role in improving their local schools. The basis of EXCELENCIA’s success is its learning model, comprised of three phases - I learn, I practice, I apply. With these three phrases, EXCELENCIA is empowering teachers to provide more individualized attention to students who in turn are encouraged to learn at their own pace.

EXCELENCIA is now expanding its reach to an additional 2,000 schools through teacher training, community mobilization and the establishment of resource centers which provides educators and the community at large with materials to improve education.

At the center of this work are the students. Through the model of learning, practicing and applying, children in EXCELENCIA schools have an awakening; they are more dynamic and communicative and have the tools to become masters of their learning.

**ANNEXES**

*Table 7: Enrollment in Primary Education Served by EXCELENCIA*

	National Total	Excelencia Schools	Excelencia Coverage
Initial Enrolment	965,536	233,857	24%

Source: MECD, Preliminary dates

*Table 8: Percentage of Primary Teachers Working in EXCELENCIA Schools*

Total of primary teachers at the national level	26,894
Total of primary teachers working in EXCELENCIA schools	7,393
<b>Percentage of primary teachers in EXCELENCIA schools</b>	<b>27%</b>

*Table 9: Schools Served by EXCELENCIA per Number of Teachers*

Category	Number of Schools	%
Schools with one teacher	195	17%
Schools with two teachers	150	13%
Schools with three teachers	115	10%
Schools with four teachers	94	8%
Schools with five teachers	53	5%
Schools with six or more teachers	513	46%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1120</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Table 10: Completion of 5th and 6th Grade in EXCELENCIA Schools*

Boys and Girls Completing 6th . Grade	Girls	Both genders
Initial Enrollment 2006 (*)	15,487	30,347
Final Enrollment 2006 (estimated)	14,868	28,821
Total who passed	14,273	27,380
Retention Rate **	0.96	0.95
Passing Rate **	0.96	0.95
Boys and Girls Completing 5th. Grade	Girls	Both genders
Initial Enrollment 2006 (*)	16,993	33,306
Final Enrollment 2006 ( estimated)	16,143	31,308
Total who passed	14,206	26,925
Retention Rate**	0.95	0.94
Passing Rate **	0.88	0.86
(*) = Enrolment in 1120 EXCELENCIA schools registered as of December 2006		
(**) The same retention and passing rates of 2005 were applied.		
Source: Dirección de Estadísticas MECD (preliminary numbers)		

Table 11: Number of participants in EXCELENCIA trainings

<b>Participants in EXCELENCIA training events</b>			
	<b>Attendant</b>		
<b>Position of the participant</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
Teacher	9,095	1,172	10,267
Student	1,840	1,194	3,034
Parent	1,418	444	1,862
Principals, Administrative and Advisors	5,083	1,860	6,943
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,436</b>	<b>4,670</b>	<b>22,106</b>
Source: EXCELENCIA records			

Table 12: Participants in EXCELENCIA training events during year 2006

	<b>Attendants per gender and duration of the training</b>								
	<b>One day</b>		<b>Two days</b>		<b>Three to Five days</b>		<b>Total</b>		<b>Total</b>
	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F&amp;M</b>
Teacher	8115	1081	643	51	337	40	9095	1172	10267
Student	1798	1168	42	26	0	0	1840	1194	3034
Parent	1396	435	22	8	0	1	1418	444	1862
Other	4186	1507	683	262	214	91	5083	1860	6943
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,495</b>	<b>4,191</b>	<b>1,390</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>551</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>17,436</b>	<b>4,670</b>	<b>22,106</b>

Table 13: Consolidated Table of people trained by EXCELENCIA in year 2006

	<b>Female</b>		<b>Male</b>		<b>Total both genders</b>	
	<b>Attendants</b>	<b>Day/person trained</b>	<b>Attendants</b>	<b>Day/person trained</b>	<b>Attendants</b>	<b>Day/person trained</b>
Teacher	9.095	11.076	1.172	1.383	10.267	12.459
Student	1.840	1.882	1.194	1.220	3.034	3.102
Parent	1.418	1.440	444	454	1.862	1.894
Other	5.083	6.194	1.860	2.306	6.943	8.500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17.436</b>	<b>20.592</b>	<b>4.670</b>	<b>5.363</b>	<b>22.106</b>	<b>25.955</b>

Table 14: Comparative tables of enrolment in primary education EXCELENCIA schools

<b>Initial Enrolment in 2006 in the schools of EXCELENCIA network</b>				
	<b>Centers</b>	<b>Both genders</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>% girls</b>
Boaco	61	9.950	4.862	49%
Carazo	44	9.694	4.699	48%
Chinandega	94	20.428	9.875	48%
Chontales	74	10.864	5.574	51%
Estelí	43	8.891	4.364	49%
Granada	52	11.630	5.486	47%
Jinotega	64	13.806	6.936	50%
León	88	14.040	6.601	47%
Madriz	69	10.433	5.053	48%
Managua	75	32.054	15.567	49%
Masaya	36	14.663	6.986	48%
Matagalpa	104	20.228	9.839	49%
Nueva Segovia	72	12.876	6.373	49%
RAAN	65	12.949	6.328	49%
RAAS	66	14.205	7.096	50%
Rio San Juan	36	5.911	2.872	49%
Rivas	77	11.235	5.235	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1120</b>	<b>233.857</b>	<b>113.746</b>	<b>49%</b>

<b>Initial Enrollment in Primary School at the national level in 2006</b>				
	<b>Centers</b>	<b>Both genders</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>% Girls</b>
Boaco	371	29.648	14.546	49%
Carazo	192	27.966	13.446	48%
Chinandega	383	71.643	34.073	48%
Chontales	503	32.344	16.055	50%
Estelí	326	34.634	16.858	49%
Granada	175	30.581	14.563	48%
Jinotega	777	72.097	35.669	49%
León	483	62.522	29.410	47%
Madriz	257	24.887	11.929	48%
Managua	800	193.950	93.970	48%
Masaya	193	47.632	22.731	48%
Matagalpa	1.019	98.569	47.907	49%
Nueva Segovia	401	41.644	20.295	49%
RAAN	813	76.966	37.633	49%
RAAS	1.115	69.378	33.965	49%
Rio San Juan	343	26.002	12.515	48%
Rivas	199	25.073	11.800	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8.350</b>	<b>965.536</b>	<b>467.365</b>	<b>48%</b>

Table 15: Initial Enrolment in EXCELENCIA Schools per Type of School and Department

	Multigrade	Multigrade Bilingual	Regular	Regular Bilingual	Total
Department	Total Both Genders	Total Both Genders	Total Both Genders	Total Both Genders	Total Both Genders
Boaco	3355	.	6595	.	9950
Carazo	2307	.	7387	.	9694
Chinandega	7371	.	13057	.	20428
Chontales	2822	.	8042	.	10864
Estelí	1639	.	7252	.	8891
Granada	3857	.	7773	.	11630
Jinotega	5442	.	8364	.	13806
León	6458	.	7582	.	14040
Madriz	4263	.	6170	.	10433
Managua	2734	.	29320	.	32054
Masaya	1430	.	13233	.	14663
Matagalpa	7057	.	13171	.	20228
Nueva Segovia	4020	.	8856	.	12876
RAAN	1756	1633	4090	5470	12949
RAAS	2851	183	8237	2934	14205
Rio San Juan	2068	.	3843	.	5911
Rivas	3404	.	7831	.	11235
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>62.834</b>	<b>1.816</b>	<b>160.803</b>	<b>8.404</b>	<b>233.857</b>

Source: MECD, (preliminary numbers).

Table 16: Best Primary Teachers at the Departmental Level in 2006, Serving in the Schools Network of EXCELENCIA.

Department	Teacher	School	Category
Granada	Luisa Hernández Hernández	Mons. Abel Ruiz	Mentor
León	Maria Delia González	Miguel Larreinaga	Mentor
Chinandega	Ma. Virginia Vázquez	Alfonso Cortés	Mentor
Río San Juan	Elena Ma. Vargas Galeano	Autónoma El Almendro	Mentor
Matagalpa	Gladys Campo Zelaya	Pozo Público	Satellite
Madriz	Carmen Ramona Benavides	Rafaela Herrera	Mentor
Chontales	Azucena Martínez	Jose Dolores Estrada	Mentor
Jinotega	Yessi Marla Sánchez M.	José Martínez	Mentor
Rivas	Enma Hurtado	Carlos González	Satellite

In 9 of the 14 departments of the country, teachers of EXCELENCIA schools won awards as Best Primary School Teachers at Departmental Level.

*Table 17: Best Primary Students 2006 at Departmental Level*

<b>Department</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Category</b>
Boaco	Ivana María Ramírez Paul Ramón Cisneros	Nena María Quezada Celestina Robleto	Mentor Satellite
Chinandega	Alejandro Enrique Téllez	Tomás Martínez	Mentor
Río San Juan	Vilma Rosa Rivera Miranda	San Vicente	Satellite
Nueva Segovia	Fátima Hernández Gómez	Hermanos González	Mentor
Estelí	William Sarahí Avilés Ramón Jhose Acevedo Rocha	Flor de Sacuanjoche Rubén Darío	Satellite Mentor
Chontales	Deybis Jan Carlos Kauffman Carlos Aurelio Vargas	Simón Bolívar Pablo Hurtado	Mentor Mentor
Zelaya	Lázaro Andrés Dávila Flores	Cristo Redentor	Mentor
Jinotega	Yolaina Geovanela Amarilis Susana Rivera	José Martínez Benjamín Zeledón	Mentor Mentor
Rivas	Lilliam Roque	R. Cabezas	Satellite

In 9 of the 14 departments of the country, students of the EXCELENCIA schools won awards as the Best Primary Students at Departmental Level.

Table 18: Best Primary Teachers in 2006 at Municipal Level

Dep. Munic.	Teacher	School	Category
<b>Managua:</b> Mateare Villa El Carmen	Teresa del Socorro Reyes Natalia López Mendoza	Enmanuel Mongalo Santa Rita	Satellite Mentor
<b>Boaco:</b> Teustepe Santa Lucía	Justo Pastora Sovalbarro Iseli A. Saravia	Nena Ma. Quezada Francisca García	Mentor Mentor
<b>León:</b> Telica	Maria Delia González	Miguel Larreinaga	Mentor
<b>Granada:</b> Granada Diriomno	Mirna Isabel Duarte Luisa Hernández Hernández	Padre Antonio Stella Mons. Abel Ruiz	Mentor Mentor
<b>Chinandega:</b> Santo Tomás Puerto M.	Petrona Alicia Betanco Ma. Virginia Vázquez	Rosibel Katin Alfonso Cortez	Satellite Mentor
<b>Masaya:</b> Nandasmo	Gladys Elizabeth Hernández	Gloria Betsabé Arias	Mentor
<b>Río San Juan:</b> San Miguelito El Almendro	Isaac Díaz Huerta Elena Ma. Vargas Galeano	Autónoma San Miguel Autónoma El Almendro	Mentor Mentor
<b>Matagalpa:</b> Esquipulas Tuma Rio Blanco Matagalpa Muy Muy	Mercedes Aguinaga Ortega Alba Nubia Gurdían Gloria Sevilla Rugama Gladys Campo Zelaya Concepción Vega	David René Espinoza La Dalia Concepción A. Pozo Público CEA Bernil Du Morales	Mentor Satellite Mentor Satellite Mentor
<b>Nueva Segovia:</b> Jalapa	Mercedes Valladares	Santa Coloma	Satellite
<b>Estelí:</b> Pueblo Nuevo	Guadalupe del Rosario R.	Rubén Darío	Mentor
<b>Madriz:</b> Palacauina Togogalpa Telpanica Palacaguina	Damaris Cruz Cordonero Margarita Reina Abad Hernández Carmen Ramona Benavides	Miguel Larreinaga Rubén Darío Hermanos Fresno Rafaela Herrera	Mentor Satellite Mentor Mentor
<b>Chontales:</b> Juigalpa Acoyapa La Libertad S.Pedro Lóvago Cuapa	Luisa Ayala Balbina Calero Molina Minerva Yadira López Ríos Martha Lorena González Azucena Martínez	Enrique Tierno Galván Simón Bolívar Jose Reyes Canales Brisas del Río Jose Dolores Estrada	Satellite Mentor Mentor Satellite Mentor
<b>Zelaya:</b> Muelle Bueyes El Rama	Nubia Eugenia Rocha Granja Johana Mairena G.	Monseñor Salvador S. Iván Sequeira Cerrato	Satellite Satellite
<b>Jinotega:</b> La Concordia S. Rafael Norte	Fátima Zeledón López Yessi Marla Sánchez M.	Benjamín Zeledón José Martínez	Mentor Mentor
<b>Rivas:</b> Altagracia Potosí	Aliriam González Enma Hurtado	Rubén Darío Carlos González	Mentor Satellite

Table 19: Best Primary Students in 2006 at Municipal Level

Department	Student	School	Category
<b>Managua</b> Mateare	Salvador Artola Carrión	Gabriela Mistral	Mentor
<b>Boaco</b> Boaco Santa Lucía Teustepe	Paul Ramón Cisneros Eliécer Lampos Ivana María Ramírez	Celestina Robleto Francisca García Nena María Quezada	Satellite Mentor Mentor
<b>Granada</b> Diriá Diriomo	Tiffani López Rueda Jose Luis Márquez	Mons. Abel Ruiz Rafael Herrera	Mentor Mentor
<b>León</b> Achuapa Telica El Sauce	Juan Basilio Cerros Murillo Yodelis Mercedes Lumbi Luis Enmanuel Velásquez	Adelita Sorto El Jicarito La Palma	Mentor Satellite Mentor
<b>Chinandega</b> San Pedro Santo Tomás Puerto M. Corinto	Jonathan Eli Perez Arce María Lizet Avila Kattia Paz Murguía Alejandro Enrique Téllez	Digna Emérita Guevara Gabriela Tábor María del P. Mendoza Tomás Martínez	Mentor Satellite Satellite Mentor
<b>Río San Juan</b> San Carlos El Almendro	Vilma Rosa Rivera Miranda Carlos Duarte Rocha	San Vicente Villa Alvarez	Satellite Satellite
<b>Matagalpa</b> Tuma La Dalia Muy Muy Río Blanco	Misael Salvador Tiberino Reyna Esther Hernández Dalia Chavarría Wilber Galeano	La Dalia 14 de Septiembre CEA Bernil Du Morales Rubén Darío	Satellite Satellite Mentor Satellite
<b>Nueva Segovia</b> Ocotol Jalapa Mozonte San Fernando	Daniela Adriana Ríos F. Leyla Lisette Siles Fátima Hernández Gómez Jose Manuel González	Rubén Darío Enmanuel Mongalo Hermanos Gómez Monseñor Carranza	Mentor Satellite Mentor Satellite
<b>Estelí</b> San Nicolás Pueblo Nuevo La Trinidad	Lilliam Sarahí Avilés Ramón José Acevedo Rocha Cristian Josué Camacho	Flor de Sacuanjoche Rubén Darío La Caña	Satellite Mentor Satellite
<b>Madrid</b> Somoto Palacaguina Togogalpa Las Sabanas Telpanica Telpanica	Luis Miguel Lira Centeno Carolina E. Martínez Dasis Manuel Paz Julissa Auxiliadora Pérez Carolina Eliz Martínez Margarita González	15 de Septiembre Enmanuel Mongalo Santo Domingo Julio Cesar Castillo 15 de Septiembre Hermanos de Fresno	Satellite Satellite Satellite Mentor Satellite Mentor
<b>Chontales</b> Acoyapa S. P. Lóvago Villa Sandino La Libertad	Derbis Jan Carlos Kauffman Carlos Aurelio Vargas Bryan Mercado Ortega Katerin Priscila Rivera	Simón Bolívar Pablo Hurtado Divino Nazareno José Reyes Canales	Mentor Mentor Satellite Mentor
<b>Zelaya</b> Muelle Bueyes El Rama	Lázaro Andrés Dávila Flores Walter Méndez	Cristo Redentor Madre Guadalupe C.	Mentor Mentor
<b>Jinotega</b> S. Rafael Norte La Concordia Jinotega	Yolaina Geovanela Amarilis Susana Riviera Marlon Alvarado	José Martínez Benjamín Zeledón Francisco Luis E.	Mentor Mentor Mentor
<b>Rivas</b> Potosí	Francely Hurtecho Pérez	Carlos González	Satellite

<b>Department</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Category</b>
Altagracia Moyogalpa	Manuel Sandoval Cruz Lilliam Roque	Rubén Darío R. Cabezas	Mentor Satellite
<b>Carazo</b> Santa Teresa San Marcos San Marcos	Jason Ali Cortez Castillo Yahaira del Socorro López Luis Alfonso López Aragón	Enmanuel Mongalo Dr. René Schick Dr. René Schick	Mentor Satellite Satellite