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Exelencia Quarterly Report
July 2006 – September 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 EXCELENCIA Centers 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

USAID Cooperative Agreement No. GDG-A-00-03-00006-00

USAID Nicaragua Cooperative Agreement No. 524-A-00-06-00004-00

Period of the Report: July 1, 2006 – September 30, 2006

Budget: \$11,500,000

Start Date: November 29, 2006

Ending date: October 29, 2009

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ACRONYMS

AED	Academy for Educational Development
AIR	American Institutes for Research
APA	Aprendo, Practico y Aplico (Learn, Practice, Apply)
BASE	Basic Education and Training Program II
COP	Chief of Party
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
EQUIP	Education Quality Improvement Program
EXCELENCIA	Expansion of EXCELENCIA Centers in Nicaragua with Emphasis on the APA Methodology (Aprendo, Practico y Aplico)
GDA	Global Development Alliance
MECD	Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports
PRONICASS	Nicaraguan Program in Support of the Social Sector
SO	Strategic Objective
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
RAAN	Autonomous Region of the North Atlantic
RAAS	Autonomous Region of the South Atlantic
BIE	Bilingual Intercultural Education
FADCANIC	Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The July to September 2006 quarter was essential for advancing the goals of expansion of EXCELENCIA. After the project team evaluated the expansion of mentor and *escuelas irradiadas* (or satellite schools where EXCELENCIA spread the APA methodology) of the BASE II Project, EXCELENCIA developed a strengthening process for the use of the active learning methodology. At the same time, EXCELENCIA and the MECD identified new mentor schools which, in turn, have identified their potential satellite schools for the mentoring activity. During the present quarter, 933 schools joined the EXCELENCIA network, representing 93.3% of the expansion goal established for December 2006.

EXCELENCIA has continued carrying out its expansion strategy through encouragement and training of MECD departmental and municipal delegates and educational advisers, school directors and teachers, as well as through sharing of experiences between parents and students in the network schools. During this quarter, a total of 12,471 people participated in events sponsored by EXCELENCIA, representing a total of 13,374 days of training.

The specialists developing the educational aid materials for the implementation of the new competency-based curriculum for regular elementary education have completed their work. The Teacher Guides and the Student Workbooks, corresponding to the contents to be developed in the third quarter of the school year are in process of being validated in the sample of selected schools for the Pacific Coast. The specialists developing the educational aid materials for multi-grade schools have continued their work according to the previously established development plan, and expect to complete the work by October 2006.

The first results of the validation of the new materials, in the sample of schools selected for validation, were collected in successive visits by MECD teams, and in meetings called to that end with school directors and teachers. In addition, EXCELENCIA implemented the first evaluation study on mentor schools and identified preliminary results. The mentor and satellite schools carried out a self-evaluation process whose results show growing enthusiasm and interest in the application and expansion of the active learning methodology and in the participation of parents in school decisions regarding the education of their children.

During this quarter the contract with FADCANIC, the NGO selected to carry out the EXCELENCIA actions in the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast, was executed. FADCANIC has begun activities by selecting its technical personnel and specialists in Bilingual Intercultural Education. EXCELENCIA has contracted 12 of those specialists to work with FADCANIC in the production of the aid materials.

As part of its Communications Plan, EXCELENCIA created its own link on the webpage of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (MECD), which is systematically updated with weekly and monthly planned activities, reports, and success stories of the Project. Students and teachers of EXCELENCIA schools won many of the national, departmental, and municipal awards in the annual competition organized by the MECD to reward the best teachers and students. This demonstrates the impact of the methodology promoted by EXCELENCIA on the quality education received by students in the network schools.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

I. OUTCOME NUMBER 1: EXPANSION OF THE EXCELENCIA SCHOOLS NETWORK THAT APPLY THE APA METHODOLOGY

A) Expansion of the Schools Network

EXCELENCIA, through its eight facilitators, has continued the strengthening process of the BASE II mentor and satellite schools - known as “pioneer mentor schools” - and the expansion to new schools in support of the goal of reaching an additional 2,000 new schools in all the 152 municipalities of the country by September 2009.

In September 2006, 241 new schools in 143 municipalities were already part of the network. This increases the total number of schools reached to date to 933 (184 mentor and 749 satellite), an increase of 34% above the number of schools incorporated at the beginning of EXCELENCIA with a progress rate of 93.3% in the achievement based on the goal established for December 2006.

Table 1: Schools served by EXCELENCIA, by Quarter and Category

Schools by Categories	February 2006	June 2006	September 2006
BASIS II Mentor	112	112	112
GDA Schools		36	36
Mentor in new municipalities		29	29
New mentor		7	7
Satellite	528	526	749
TOTAL	640	710	933

Source: EXCELENCIA Project. September 2006.

Table 2: The expansion of EXCELENCIA as of September 2006

Coverage by Municipalities	
Number of municipalities in the country	152
Number of municipalities covered by BASE II 2005	109
Percentage of municipalities covered by BASE II 2005	72%
Number of municipalities covered by EXCELENCIA 2006	143
% of covered municipalities By EXCELENCIA 2006	94%

Coverage by Schools	
Number of public elementary schools (2005)	7665
Number of schools served by EXCELENCIA September 2006	933
Pioneer mentor schools including bilingual schools	112
New mentor schools 2006	72
Satellite schools	749
% of schools served as of September 2006	12%
Expansion goal December 2006	1092

Difference	159
% of schools served by EXCELENCIA December 2006	14%

Coverage by Enrollment	
Total elementary school enrollment 2005	945,089
Total enrollment of EXCELENCIA elementary schools 2005	216,010
Percentage of enrollment served at EXCELENCIA schools	23%

Coverage by Teachers	
Total number of primary education teachers	26,894
Total number of teachers in EXCELENCIA elementary schools	6159
Percentage of teachers at EXCELENCIA schools	23%

Source: Project EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

Table 2 shows EXCELENCIA coverage. The project currently serves 12% of elementary schools in the country in its network, a number that will rise to 14% in December. Although we still do not have up-to-date data from the MECD on elementary school enrollment in 2006, in 2005 the project's schools covered 23% of the national enrollment in Elementary Education. It is presumed that this percentage will in fact be higher because of the increase in the number of schools incorporated into the Project network. Likewise, 23% of the elementary school teachers in the country work in the EXCELENCIA schools network.

B) Training

EXCELENCIA has continued to provide training to MECD departmental and municipal authorities and to directors and teachers of mentor and satellite schools. In addition, EXCELENCIA provides forums and opportunities for MECD authorities, parents, and students to share experiences, knowledge, and lessons learned. Specifically, EXCELENCIA invites directors, delegates, and departmental educational advisers, to training events in Managua. The trained directors, delegates, and advisers in turn transmit what they have learned to teachers, delegates, and municipal advisers. Thus, the training contents reach the schools and are applied in the classrooms.

1. Training of Directors of Pioneer Mentor Schools

On August 28 – 30, EXCELENCIA held a training workshop for 100 directors of the pioneer mentor schools in the Pacific Coast and their departmental and municipal educational advisers. The objective of the training was to evaluate the strategies and results of the expansion actions focusing on the pioneer - satellites mentoring relationship during the first semester of 2006, and to plan the work for the second semester of the year.

In this training workshop 221 people participated (157 women and 64 men). A self-evaluation conducted by these schools showed the following results: five of them are considered to be at the initial level in the implementation of the EXCELENCIA methodology; 56 are considered to be at the intermediate level; and 39 at the advanced level. It should be noted that in accordance with previous BASE studies, a school needs between 18 and 24 months to an efficient mentor school.

School directors considered the sharing of experiences among the mentor and satellite schools, together with the support of parents, as the most effective instruments in the expansion process. The EXCELENCIA mentor schools are gaining a deserved prestige, manifested among other things by the growing demand from private schools to enter the expansion process, even by covering the costs derived from their participation. The mentor schools where the local training workshops, exchanges and meetings are held have become efficient learning centers for both teachers and parents.

2. Training of Directors and Educational Advisers:

On July 17 – 18 and again on August 14 – 15, EXCELENCIA carried out two two-day training sessions with the directors and educational advisers of the 72 new mentor schools included in the network. The objective of these workshops was to train the directors and educational advisers on how to ensure and strengthen the educational components of the active learning methodology in their schools. Two hundred and sixty people participated (111 men and 149 women).

During the facilitators' visits to these new mentor schools it has been possible to confirm the rapid progress that these schools have achieved with regard to the application of the educational components. The majority of these new mentor schools have trained their teachers and initiated their identification and expansion activities to satellite schools.

3. Regional and Departmental Meetings

Following the expansion strategic guidelines, the eight EXCELENCIA facilitators carried out three regional and departmental meetings with educational advisers and directors of mentor schools in their geographical areas. The objective of these meetings is to share experiences and to plan departmental and municipal training activities that the directors carry out with the teachers of their mentor and pioneer schools. The directors thus become promoters of the active learning methodology and facilitators of the training of their teachers. All this strengthens their leadership. A total of 599 participants (416 women and 183 men) participated in these meetings, according to the following table:

Table 2: Departmental and Regional Meetings of Directors and Educational Advisers

Name of the activity	Date	No. of days	Participants			Training Man-Days
			Men	Women	Total	
Regional meeting of directors and advisers	August 9-17	1 day	101	176	277	277
Regional meeting of directors and advisers	August 9-18	1 day	67	191	258	258
Regional meeting of directors and advisers	Sept. 11-15	1 day	15	49	64	64
TOTALS			183	416	599	599

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

4. Sharing of Experiences between Mentor Schools Among Themselves and with their Satellites

During this reporting period, each of the 100 new mentor schools held three 'sharing of experiences' events. These exchanges were led by the directors of the schools, supported by the departmental, and municipal educational advisers. A total of 4,696 persons who participated in these exchanges (3,449 women and 1,247 men) regard these exchanges as a

valuable and enriching experience that strengthens their abilities to improve their performance in the application of the active learning methodology in the school centers. The schools that host this type of exchange see their role strengthened and the prestige of their teachers, students, and parents' associations.

Table 3. Sharing of Experiences between EXCELENCIA Network Schools

Name of the activity	Dates	No. of days	Participation			Training Man-Days
			Men	Women	Total	
Regional exchange between pioneer mentor schools	August 21 to 25	1 day	74	334	408	408
Exchange between pioneer mentor schools and their satellites	August 21 to 25	1 day	1116	2865	3,981	3,981
Regional sharing of experiences between pioneer mentors and new mentors	August 21 to 25	1 day	57	250	307	307
TOTAL			1,247	3,449	4,696	4,696

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

5. Departmental Meetings with Educational Leaders:

From July 10 to 14, EXCELENCIA conducted a series of departmental meetings with parents, students, and teaching leaders simultaneously at pioneer mentor schools and their *escuelas irradiadas*. The objective of these meetings is to share practical experiences and educational materials developed in the classrooms, to enhance the capacities of all the participants. A total of 1,969 people (1,263 women and 706 men) participated in these meetings during the quarter.

6. Local Workshops to Strengthen the Network Schools in the Application of the Active Learning Methodology:

During this quarter, EXCELENCIA held training workshops at the local level in each department; participants included mentor and satellite school teachers. These workshops trained 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th grade teachers in Spanish and Mathematics through active and practical processes to improve their performance in the classrooms. A total of 2,040 teachers (1,745 women and 295 men) participated in these workshops. The participants gave very positive evaluations of this training experience, an experience they usually do not have access due to MECD budgetary constraints.

Table 4. Participants in Local Workshops for 3rd and 4th Grades by Departments

Department	Date	Men	Women	Total
Estelí, Madriz, and Nueva Segovia	1 to 4 August	58	345	403
Matagalpa and Jinotega	1 to 4 August	63	307	370
Chontales, RAAS	2, 3 and 4 August	22	170	192
Río San Juan	1 to 4 August	5	59	64
Boaco, Managua	1, 2, 4 and 7 August	44	248	292
Masaya, Granada	4 August	39	189	228
León, Chinandega	4 to 11 August	41	249	290

Carazo, Rivas	10 and 11 August	23	178	201
TOTAL		295	1,745	2,040

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

Table 5: Participants in Local Workshops for 5th and 6th Grades, by Departments

Department	Date	No. of participants		
		Men	Women	Total
Estelí	4, 6 and 8 September	12	109	121
Madriz	5, 6 and 8 September	46	99	145
Nueva Segovia	8 September	20	94	114
Chontales	4 and 8 September	7	105	112
RAAS (Rama, Muelle de los Bueyes)	7 September	12	45	57
Río San Juan	4 to 8 September	8	58	66
RAAS (Nueva Guinea)	8 September	4	14	18
Boaco	4 to 8 September	11	97	108
Managua	4 to 7 September	50	113	163
Masaya	8 September	31	105	136
Granada	8 September	20	61	81
Carazo	7 to 8 September	21	70	91
Rivas	6 to 8 September	27	98	125
Chinandega	4 to 8 September	23	149	172
León	4 to 8 September	28	130	158
TOTAL		320	1,347	1,667

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

7. Training of 1st and 2nd Grade Teachers in Active Methodologies of Learning Reading and Writing:

In support of the policies of the MECD to strengthen the learning processes of reading and writing and mathematics in the first two years of elementary education, on July 7 and 8 EXCELENCIA carried out the Second Workshop for Selected First and Second Grades Teachers of network schools. Fifty-eight teachers (54 women and 4 men) participated in the workshop. The objective of this workshop was to strengthen the teachers in learning and owning the “significant expressions” technique in support of facilitating the active learning of reading and writing of students. Participants developed reading projects for multi-grade schools in the workshop.

Participating teachers expressed certain results from the application of the techniques learned in the First Workshop, held during the previous quarter. Around 60% of the teachers stated that their students are already capable of reading and writing correctly as a result of the application in their classroom. Teacher contributed this success to the techniques learned in the workshop, which in turn were transmitted to the teachers of the satellite schools from their mentors, covering 100% of the same. In their workshops, the directors of the mentor schools have confirmed the application and the success of these techniques in their schools.

8. Rounds of Technical Assistance Visits of Departmental and Municipal Educational Advisers to Mentor Schools:

The purpose of the technical assistance visits is to confirm the progress of the mentor schools in the application and expansion of the active learning methodology, and to provide technical assistance to the same for their improvement. This activity favors institutionalization by

making the local MECD officials responsible for supported supervision and technical assistance to the mentor schools in their regions. Each Departmental and Municipal Adviser carried out at least two visits to the mentor schools in his/her area and to a sample of satellite schools.

Table 6: Visits Carried Out by Educational Advisers to the Schools

Department	Project Schools			Visits during the Period		Total Visits
	Mentor	Satellites	Total	July	August	
Masaya	10	24	34	34	27	61
Granada	11	20	31	30	24	54
Rivas	12	36	48	31	35	66
Carazo	9	31	40	49	44	93
León	19	51	70	53	55	108
Chinandega	15	71	86	81	41	122
Chontales	10	43	53	44	43	87
RAAS	9	33	42	26	24	50
RAAN	7	31	38	-	-	0
Jinotega	10	42	52	22	39	61
Matagalpa	14	69	83	39	45	84
Managua	22	56	78	59	58	117
Boaco	6	57	63	33	33	66
Río San Juan	6	25	31	36	38	74
Madriz	9	62	71	38	24	62
Nueva Segovia	9	62	71	12	12	24
Estelí	6	36	42	30	30	60
Total	184	749	933	617	572	1,189

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

Table No. 7.: Consolidated of Advances in Number of Training Man-days throughout the Last Two Quarters of 2006.

Period	Participants			Total Man-Days
	Men	Women	Total	
January-June				5,747
July - September	3,170	9,301	12,471	13,374
Total accrued				19,121

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

Table 8: Consolidated of Training for the July – September Quarter

Name of the activity	Date	No. of days	Participants			Man-Days
			Men	Women	Total	
Second National Workshop for 1 st and 2 nd Grade teachers	July 7-8	2 days	4	54	58	116
1st National Validation Meeting of the Regular Elementary Education Curriculum	July 20-21	2 days	22	296	318	636
Second National Workshop of new mentor schools	July 17-18	2 days	43	78	121	242

Name of the activity	Date	No. of days	Participants			Man-Days
			Men	Women	Total	
Departmental Meetings with educational leaders	July 10-14	1 day	706	1263	1969	1969
Third Regional Meeting of Directors and Departmental Advisors	July 24-28	1 day	45	115	160	160
Local workshops with 3rd and 4 th grade teachers	August 1-4	1 day	295	1745	2040	2040
1st National Validation Meeting of the Curriculum for Multi-grade Elementary Education	August 7-8	2 days	15	81	96	192
Regional Meeting of Directors and Advisers of Mentor Schools	August 9-17	1 day	101	176	277	277
Regional Meeting of Directors of Mentor Schools	August 9-18	1 day	67	191	258	258
3rd National Meeting with Directors and Advisers of New Mentor Schools	August 14-15	2 days	68	71	139	278
Regional Exchange between pioneer mentor schools	August 21-25	1 day	74	334	408	408
Exchange between pioneer mentor schools and their satellites	August 21-25	1 day	1116	2865	3981	3981
Regional sharing of experiences between pioneer and new mentor schools	August 21-25	1 day	57	250	307	307
2nd National Meeting of Directors and Advisers of pioneer mentor schools	August 28-30	3 days	157	64	221	663
Local workshops for 5 th and 6 th grade teachers	September 4-8	1 day	320	1347	1667	1396
Regional Meeting of Municipal and Departmental Directors and Advisers	September 11-15	1 day	15	49	64	64
Local Workshops for teachers of Matagalpa and Jinotega	September 22, 25, 28 and 29	1 day	65	322	387	387
TOTAL	–	–	3, 170	9, 301	12, 471	13, 374

C) Achievements for Result 2

All the described activities carried out during the present quarter have allowed EXCELENCIA to increase its coverage to 34 new municipalities in the country, and 241 new schools which are efficiently applying the active learning methodology. This led to an increase in the enrollment in the elementary schools served by EXCELENCIA, from 18% to 23%. These five percentage points, small with regard to the number of new schools in the network, need to be analyzed within the framework that the majority of the new incorporated schools are of the multi-grade modality. These schools have smaller numbers of students than the regular schools, but better reflect the educational reality in rural areas. Serving these schools makes it possible to achieve the equality in education sought by EXCELENCIA in its program.

Attendance at EXCELENCIA events, and the appeal demonstrated by the project reflects the growing confidence that teachers, departmental and local authorities, directors and parents have in the educational methodology that we promote. This contributes to the sustainability objective of the project vis-à-vis any variable that could debilitate its intervention.

II. OUTCOME NUMBER 2: NEW COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM FOR ELEMENTARY EDUCATION THAT INCLUDES BILINGUAL INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION, VALIDATED AND INCORPORATED INTO THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM.

A) Production of Aid Materials for the New Curriculum

1. Preparation of the materials for Regular Elementary Education

EXCELENCIA finalized the Teachers' Guides and Student Workbooks, corresponding to the application of the contents for the third quarter of the school year. Two specialist and designer teams were formed to make the corresponding adjustments to the materials validated in the previous quarters.

2. Preparation of Aid Materials for Multi-grade Elementary Education

The team of specialists who prepared the aid materials for Multi-grade Elementary Education has continued producing the units according to plan, and expects to meet its production goals in October. A team of six specialists will incorporate the changes in the materials resulting from the validation currently underway at schools in the Pacific Coast.

3. Printing of Aid Materials and Distribution to the Validation Sample Schools

The materials developed continued to be printed and distributed in the 150 schools of the Pacific Coast selected for validation, based on the following table:

Table 9: Production of Educational Materials during the Quarter

Type of Educational Material	Quantity
Teaching suggestions for Regular Elementary Education teachers	5,400 copies
Notebooks for students of Regular Elementary Education	30,800 copies
Guides and Integrated Components for Multi-grade Elem. Educ.	6,181 copies
TOTAL	42,381 copies

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

The quarterly accumulation that has been made in the production of educational materials for validation is as follows:

Table 10: Production of Educational Materials for Regular Elementary, accumulated by Quarters

Material Teaching Suggestions for Teachers	1st Qtr.	2nd Qtr.	3rd Qtr.	Total
For 1st Grade	1,700	900	900	3,500
For 2nd Grade	2,700	900	900	4,500
For 3rd Grade	1,700	900	900	3,500
For 4 th Grade	1,700	900	900	3,500
For 5 th Grade	1,700	900	900	3,500
For 6 th Grade	1,700	900	900	3,500
TOTAL	11,200	5,400	5,400	22,000

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

Material Student Workbooks	1st Qtr.	2nd Qtr.	3rd Qtr.	Total
For 1st Grade	10,000	5,900	6,200	22,100
For 2nd Grade	10,000	4,700	5,000	19,700
For 3rd Grade	7,000	4,600	4,900	16,500
For 4 th Grade	5,000	4,600	4,900	14,500
For 5 th Grade	4,000	4,200	4,900	13,100
For 6 th Grade	3,000	3,810	4,900	11,710
TOTAL	39,000	27,810	30,800	97,610

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

Table 11. Production of Educational Material for Multi-grade Elementary, accumulated by Quarters

Material Student Workbooks	1st Qtr.	2nd Qtr.	3rd Qtr.	Total
Mathematics for 4th Grade	500	549	559	1,608
Mathematics for 5th Grade	500	529	539	1,568
Mathematics for 6th Grade	500	489	410	1,399
Language and Literature for 4th Grade	500	549	559	1,608
Language and Literature for 5 th Grade	500	529	539	1,568
Language and Literature for 6th Grade	500	489	410	1,399
Science and technology for 4 th Grade	500	549	559	1,608
Science and technology for 5 th Grade	500	529	559	1,588

Material Student Workbooks	1st Qtr.	2nd Qtr.	3rd Qtr.	Total
Science and technology for 6 th Grade	500	489	410	1,399
Integrated Components for 3rd Grade	500	559	559	1,618
Integrated Components for 2 nd Grade	500	519	519	1,538
Integrated Components for Spanish and Math.	500	570	559	1,629
TOTAL	6,000	6,349	6,181	18,530

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

B) Validation

1. Validation Meetings

During the present quarter, EXCELENCIA held two meetings with representatives of the sample of validation schools along the Pacific Coast, to collect information on the functioning of the educational materials that are being validated. The first meeting brought together 318 teachers to analyze the materials for Regular Elementary Education; the second brought together 73 participants, between teachers and students, to analyze the materials for Multi-grade Elementary Education.

In the case of Regular Elementary Education, the most important suggestions from the teachers are:

- Convert the Student Workbooks into a guide and reference material, and not into a material of direct use, as it would be too expensive to annually reproduce new material for each new student.
- Reduce the number of components to be taught in first and second grade of Elementary Education, centering the curriculum into two basic components: Mathematics and Language and Literature.
- Adjust the Language and Literature component to avoid repetition and redundancies.

In the case of Multi-grade Elementary Education, the teachers and students suggested:

- To print in color the guides for first and second grades.
- To reduce the load of the Guides for Life Sciences and the Environment

2. Visits to Schools where materials are being validated

As part of the validation strategy agreed with the MECD, EXCELENCIA contracted a team of five technical staff, selected by MECD, who during this quarter carried out a series of visits to 25 school centers in 9 departments of the country. During the visits the specialists met or interviewed 125 teachers on the use of the educational materials being validated, while observing how these were applied in the classrooms.

For the validation visits of Multi-grade Elementary Education materials, a team of 25 teachers was formed in September, which began a series of visits to collect information on the application of the Learning Guides.

Table 12. Validation Visits to the Sample of Schools and Interviews Performed during the Same

Super visor	Department	Municipality	Centers	No. of people interviewed
1	1. Matagalpa	1. Matagalpa	1. Santa Teresita	4
		2. Sébaco	2. Candida Miranda	5
		3. Ciudad Darío	3. Las Tablas	4
	2. Nueva Segovia	4. Ocotal	4. San Martín	5
		5. Murra	5. NERPE Lastenia Castro	5
		6. Ciudad Antigua	6. NERPE Monseñor Madrigal	4
	3. Jinotega	7. La Concordia	7. Benjamín Zeledón	4
1	4. Managua	8. Ciudad Sandino	8. Col. Bello Amanecer	4
		9. Distrito III	9. Juan Bautista Arrién	5
		10. Villa El Carmen	10. Benjamín Zeledón	4
		11. Tipitapa	11. NERPE Gustavo Carrión Z.	7
			12. NERPE Divina Inmaculada	4
			13. NERPE Gral. José Dolores E.	5
1	5. Chinandega	12. El Viejo	14. Madre Teresa de Calcuta	2
			15. Josefa Arguello	4
		13. Chinandega	16. Hogar Pablo VI	6
		14. Corinto	17. Guillermo Delgadillo	6
	6. León	15. Quezalguaque	18. Ntra. Señora de las Mercedes	5
7. Carazo	16. Jinotepe	19. Elías Serrano	9	
1	8. Granada	17. Granada	20. José de la Cruz MENA	6
			21. Madre Teresa de Calcuta	3
			22. Bertha Pacheco	6
			23. Carmela Noguera	6
	9. Masaya	18. Masaya	24. Monimbó	7
		19. Masatepe	25. San José	5
			TOTAL	125

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

3. Adaptation of the Materials based on the Validation Results

Two teams comprised of 11 specialists and two designers were formed in coordination with the MECD to make the corresponding adjustments to the aid materials for Regular Elementary Education. In the case of Multi-grade Elementary Education materials, a team of seven specialists was formed to make adjustments to the aid materials, based on the validation results.

C) Bilingual Intercultural Education Activities in the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast

EXCELENCIA and FADCANIC signed the contract for the development of Bilingual Intercultural Education (BIE) activities along the Caribbean Coast. EXCELENCIA evaluated the administrative and accounting capabilities of the FADCANIC system and suggested the corresponding modifications and strengthening for the management of the subcontract accounting. Likewise, EXCELENCIA began the technical training to transfer to the FADCANIC team the necessary skills for a good understanding and management of the active learning methodology promoted by the Project.

FADCANIC identified and contracted its personnel, and presented for EXCELENCIA consideration the candidates for the positions of BIE specialists that will be paid with project funds. EXCELENCIA approved and contracted the proposed candidates. Furthermore, FADCANIC has initiated the process of coordination meetings with the local MECD authorities and governmental agencies of the Autonomous Regions to ensure appropriate coordination.

Planning the corresponding meetings with similar projects is underway to establish synergy mechanisms, and it is hoped that the beginning of EXCELENCIA activities will be officially launched along the Caribbean Coast at the beginning of the next quarter.

D) Result 3 Achievements

Finalizing the educational aid materials for the competency-based curriculum for Regular Elementary Education was a significant achievement in the few months that were available for this activity. The first observations from the teachers interviewed are already available, and these refer more to the number of subjects and contents proposed in the curriculum, while the quality of the presentation of those contents seems to be especially adequate. The materials for multi-grade schools will also be ready in the near future.

The EXCELENCIA coordination with the corresponding units of the MECD in the validation process has made it possible for its technical personnel to have greater capacity and experience on this subject. All the strategic planning for the validation was made with the MECD, which has helped develop a genuine sense of ownership of the process and its outcomes in the institution.

III. OUTCOME NUMBER 3: DEVELOP LONGITUDINAL STUDIES AND OTHER RESEARCH, TO EVALUATE THE IMPACT OF THE PROJECTS, AND CARRY OUT FIELD STUDIES TO DETERMINE THE EFFECTIVE CHANNELS FOR IMPROVING THE TRANSITION IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

EXCELENCIA is implementing an information system aimed at reporting on the main tasks assigned:

- a) Monitor the different indicators that measure EXCELENCIA's progress; and
- b) Carry out studies to delve further into the analysis of different aspects affecting the quality of the support provided to the schools.

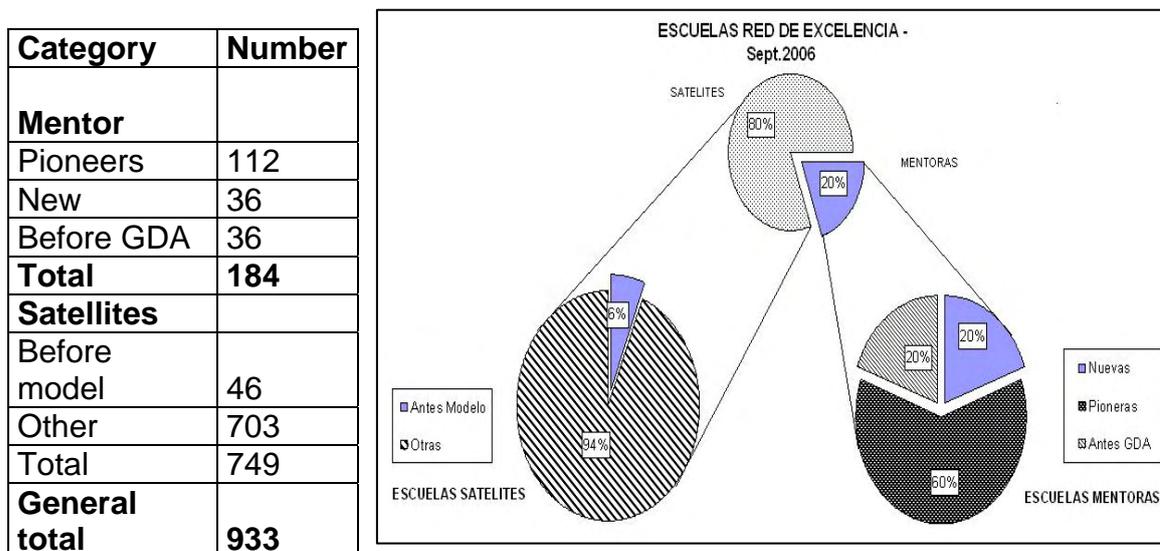
A) Monitoring

1. Monitoring Indicators

EXCELENCIA prepared a Monitoring Plan that includes the following indicators:

a) Schools network of the EXCELENCIA Project

A considerable number of schools have been incorporated in this quarter, as shown in the figures below, with the hope of reaching the goal set for December 2006.



2. Departmental and municipal coverage

The schools of the EXCELENCIA Network are distributed throughout the entire national territory, as shown in Table No. 2. The table shows the ratio of satellite schools served by each mentor school in each department of the country. The table allows observing the variations in the ratio of schools served, highlighting the case of Boaco, where each mentor groups a set of 10 satellites each, while in Granada and Masaya, this number is reduced to two. The detailed analysis of this table can be very useful in achieving the expansion goals.

Table 13: Schools served by Department, based on Category.

Department	Mentor	Satellites	TOTAL	Ratio of Satellites per Mentor
Boaco	6	57	63	10
Carazo	9	31	40	3
Chinandega	15	71	86	5
Chontales	10	43	53	4
Estelí	6	36	42	6
Granada	11	20	31	2
Jinotega	10	42	52	4
León	19	51	70	3
Madriz	9	62	71	7
Managua	22	56	78	3
Masaya	10	24	34	2
Matagalpa	14	69	83	5
Nueva Segovia	9	62	71	7
RAAN	7	31	38	4
RAAS	9	33	42	4
Río San Juan	6	25	31	4
Rivas	12	36	48	3
TOTAL	184	749	933	4

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006

Nicaragua has 152 municipalities, and of those EXCELENCIA is present in 143. This represents 94% coverage of the national territory. It is important to point out that in 2005, the year of expansion of BASE II, coverage of 109 municipalities was achieved, equivalent to 72% of the municipalities of the country. This data confirms the effort made in 2006 to increase the area of coverage and cover almost all the municipalities.

3. Enrollment Indicators

EXCELENCIA serves a total of 216,010 boys and girls at its network schools, representing 23% of the enrollment in Elementary Education at the national level.

Table 14: Enrollment Data, Coverage, Retention, and Approval

	National Total	EXCELENCIA Schools	EXCELENCIA Coverage
Initial enrollment	945,089	216,010	23%
Final enrollment	862,436	202,958	24%
Total who passed	730,586	175,259	24%
Retention percentage	91%	94%	
Percentage who passed	85%	86%	

Source: MECD, enrollment data 2005.

4. Completion Indicators for 5th and 6th Grades

The goal set as indicator for EXCELENCIA regarding the number of boys and girls who will complete elementary education at schools in its network in the academic year 2006 was 21,562. The following table shows the situation of the 933 schools that as of September 2006 are part of the EXCELENCIA network.

Table 15: Completion of 5th and 6th Grades at 933 current EXCELENCIA schools

Boys and girls completing 6th Grade	Girls	Both sexes
Initial enrollment 2005 (*)	13,173	25,583
Final enrollment 2005	12,666	24,297
Total who passed	12,116	22,979
Retention rate	0.96	0.95
Passing rate	0.96	0.95
Boys and girls completing 5th Grade	Girls	Both sexes
Initial enrollment 2005 (*)	13,366	26,862
Final enrollment 2005	12,717	25,276
Total who passed	11,240	21,756
Retention rate	0.95	0.94
Passing rate	0.88	0.86

(*) = Enrollment corresponding to 933 registered schools as of September 2006.

SOURCE: Director of Statistics, MECD, 2005

5. Indicators on the Number of Teachers in the EXCELENCIA Schools Network

Twenty-three percent of the total Elementary Education teachers in the country are part of the EXCELENCIA schools network.

Table 16: Ratio of EXCELENCIA teachers vs. total number of Elementary Education teachers in the country

Total elementary education teachers at the national level	26,894
Total elementary education teachers in the EXCELENCIA schools Network	6,159
Percentage of teachers at EXCELENCIA schools	23%

Source. EXCELENCIA, September 2006.

6. Indicators related to the Educational Components

In order to monitor one of the indicators established in EXCELENCIA's Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for 2006, a format was prepared so that each of the network schools reports its degree of progress in each educational component that constitute the essence of the active learning methodology promoted by the Project. These components are:

- Use of textbooks/guides
- Student monitors
- Resolution of mathematical problems
- Reading comprehension
- Teaching planning

- Learning evaluation
- Educational projects
- Physical setting of the school
- Educational setting of the classroom
- Quality circles around the schools
- Corners of learning in the classroom
- Student government
- Participation of the parents
- Library

The components are assessed at three levels of development, according to their presence in the classrooms: initial, intermediate, and developed. The evaluation formats are filled by the schools themselves in a self-evaluation exercise, which reflects the perception that each has regarding its level of progress in the application of the components. The analysis of the information obtained through these formats for both pioneer mentor schools (BASE II) as well as the new and the “irradiadas” satellite schools can be seen in the following tables:

Table 17: Self-evaluation of Educational Components in EXCELENCIA Pioneer Mentor Schools

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Initial	13	12.9 %
Intermediate	84	83.2 %
Developed	4	4.0 %
Total	101	100.00 %

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

Table 18: Self-evaluation of Educational Components in EXCELENCIA New Mentor Schools

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Initial	44	67.69 %
Intermediate	21	32.31 %
Total	65	100 %

Table 19: Self-evaluation of educational components at EXCELENCIA Satellite Schools

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Initial	106	34.8 %
Intermediate	183	60 %
Developed	16	5.2 %
Total	305	100.0%

7. Indicators related to the Participation of Parents

An index was developed to evaluate the participation of parents at EXCELENCIA network schools, establishing a difference among the most common activities, such as cleaning, surveillance, etc. and those activities related to academic performance and the learning objectives.

Table 20: Index of Participation of Heads of Households in School Activities

LEVEL	Mentor		Satellites	Total
	Pioneers	New		
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage
Nil	1	0	1.6	1,3%
Initial	39.4	64.5	62.3	57,7%
Intermediate	39.4	24.2	24.6	27,7%
Developed	20.2	11.3	11.5	13,3%
Total	100	100	100	100%

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

B) Evaluation

1. First Applied Research Study

EXCELENCIA is committed to conducting a series of studies and research. The main activity in this area has been the implementation of the “Annual Study 2006” on the program of mentor schools. The objective of the study is to identify the factors contributing to the success of a mentor school and to its capacity to successfully expand its satellites. The study uses a research sample of 34 mentor schools and two “irradiadas” satellite schools - each one selected at random. The total number of schools participating in the study was 101. The researchers used a set of 5 instruments included questionnaires for interviews of directors and educational advisers, and observation guides of the work in the classrooms.

The collection of information was carried out through a team of 28 interviewers and 3 supervisors, selected and contracted for this work, which were trained in a 40-hour workshop and who at all times had the support and permanent presence of a Coordinator representing EXCELENCIA. The information is being analyzed this month, and we expect the final report to be ready at the beginning of next quarter. Some of the preliminary results will help the project understand the evolution of the implementation of EXCELENCIA.

Table 21: Levels of Interest Shown on the Expansion Process

Level of interest of the Directors	Frequency	Percentage
<i>None</i>	0	0,0%
<i>A little</i>	0	0,0%
<i>Somewhat</i>	2	5,9%
<i>A lot</i>	22	64,7%
<i>Very much</i>	10	29,4%

Level of interest of the mentor schools to expand, according to the Educational Advisers	Frequency	Percentage
<i>None</i>	0	0,0%
<i>A little</i>	1	2,9%
<i>Somewhat</i>	8	23,5%
<i>A lot</i>	16	47,1%
<i>Very much</i>	9	26,5%

Level of organization of the mentor schools, according to the Educational Advisers	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>None</i>	0	0,0%
<i>A little</i>	1	2,9%
<i>Somewhat</i>	3	8,8%
<i>A lot</i>	16	47,1%
<i>Very much</i>	14	41,2%

Interest of the teachers of satellite schools, according to the Directors of such schools	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>None</i>	0	0,0%
<i>A little</i>	2	3,0%
<i>Somewhat</i>	7	10,6%
<i>A lot</i>	39	59,1%
<i>Very much</i>	18	27,3%

2. Participation of the Educational Community

According to the directors of the **mentor schools**, 93.2% of its teachers, 60.7% of the parents, and 81.2% of the members of the student government are participating in the expansion program. According to the directors of the **satellite schools**, 87.8% of its teachers, 63.3% of the parents, and 72.2% of the members of the student governments are participating in the expansion program.

3. Support and obstacles found for a successful expansion

79.4% of the directors of **mentor schools** indicated they have received adequate support to effectively spread the program; 41.2% indicated they had the necessary materials for expansion and 90% consider that the selection of schools to be “irradiadas” was appropriate. In turn, 89.2% of the directors of **satellite schools** stated that their mentor schools are the most appropriate to support them in the expansion process. The educational advisers interviewed said that 85.3% of the mentor schools identified in the study were adequately prepared to perform their role as mentor schools.

4. Some preliminary suggestions from the participants in the study

The directors of mentor schools pointed out the need for greater training in teaching methodologies for multi-grade schools, since most of its satellite schools are multi-grade. Others suggested training in subjects of leadership and self-esteem, so as to strengthen their capacity to direct and guide the educational communities of their schools. For the directors of satellite schools it would be important to learn strategies to encourage greater participation on the part of parents in school activities and in the classrooms.

C. Transitions to Primary

The Transitions to Primary Research Team recently concluded research on transitions to first grade in Nicaragua and Latin America, the document was translated to English, and the document is now being vetted, edited, and revised by the research team. Once completed, it will be distributed to the EXCELENCIA team, documentation centers, universities and

researchers. The summary document will be disseminated at the National Forum on Transitions Education scheduled for October 27, 2006, in Managua.

The study includes:

- Information on pre-school and early childhood education in Nicaragua (state policies, statistics, etc.) as well as elementary education;
- An analysis of first grade school desertion, including social, cultural, and economic factors that may lead a child to drop-out of school in his/her early years;
- Discussion about children's socio-emotional and cognitive needs in the first grade and how their parents, families, and teachers can address those needs;
- Interviews with young children in Nicaragua discussing their experiences in pre-school and first grade and discussing their reasons for either staying in school or dropping out. This section of the study was taken from 10 interview sessions with parents, students, educational advisors, pre-school and first grade teachers.

The Transitions Team also solicited and received six "best practices" from non-governmental organizations and teachers working in pre-school and first grade. Those will be summarized and distributed at the National Forum and schools that submitted practices will facilitate workshops at the National Forum. The team also conducted field visits to schools in Managua, Estelí, Ocotal, and Somoto to observe practices and understand their logic.

The Transitions to Primary team also teamed with EXCELENCIA facilitator Roger Picado to facilitate a workshop on literacy strategies for pre-school and first grade in Chinandega. The 2-day workshop, attended by 150 parents, educational advisors, school directors and student governments will be especially important in preparing for the next phase of the Transitions to the Primary portion of EXCELENCIA, in which the transitions facilitators will work with EXCELENCIA facilitators to improve the transitions from pre-school to first grade in EXCELENCIA schools.

E) Result 3 Achievements

The first of the studies planned by EXCELENCIA has been carried out. The results of this study on the mentor schools indicate, as can be observed in the tables, that their level of responsibility in the expansion of the active learning methodology is high, and that they are performing that responsibility with a high level of enthusiasm.

The EXCELENCIA indicators have been defined, closely allied to the USAID indicators for its education program, and the database of the EXCELENCIA schools has been screened and updated, based on the MECD database.

A self-evaluation process of the mentor schools of the network was developed that strengthened the commitment to expanding the active learning methodology to an ever-growing number of satellites. This commitment makes the mentor schools a key instrument in the promotion and sustainability of the methodology within the educational system of the country.

IV. OTHER PROJECT ACTIVITIES DURING THE QUARTER

A) Purchase and distribution of fungible equipment to the network schools

To support the expansion and application tasks of the active learning methodology, the project has provided to 112 network schools, various fungible equipment, as explained in the following table:

Table No.22: Package of fungible equipment delivered during the quarter to 112 Mentor Schools of the EXCELENCIA network

Description	Quantity delivered by School
100-piece puzzle	39
Erasers for acrylic blackboard	4
Color cardboard folders	47
12-color small Crayola boxes	28
Box of letter size folders	4
Box of legal size folders	4
Staples box (500 units)	3
Units of permanent markers, red thick end	19
Units of permanent markers, blue thick end	19
Units of permanent markers, green thick end	19
Units of permanent markers, black thick end	19
Rolls of masking tape	5
Paper Reams bond #40 letter size	3
Paper reams bond #40 legal size	3
Sheets of shiny paper (different colors)	47
Flip chart (22 x 34)	2
Bottles of Resistol type white glue (8 ounces)	19

Source: EXCELENCIA. September 2006.

B) Visits of consultants and authorities from other countries to learn about EXCELENCIA

At the request of the **Ministry of Education of Honduras**, we received the visit of two Honduran officials to learn about the practices of EXCELENCIA mentor schools in order to identify elements that may be applied in their country. Three Chinandega schools were visited: Francisco Morazán (mentor), Villa Dolores (satellite) and General Tomás Martínez (mentor) and one in the department of León: Rafaela Herrera No. 2 (mentor). At the conclusion of the visits the officials assessed the experiences of the mentor schools as positive, pointing out the participation of parents in the visited schools.

C) Internship to learn the EXCELENCIA methodology

Hernán Tórres, a Colombian **consultant** residing in Honduras, visited the country during a two-week period, with the objective of learning the EXCELENCIA experience, its actions and the progress of the mentor schools. During the visit of this consultant working meetings were held with the team that develops the aid materials for the competency-based multi-grade curriculum, as well as discussions with the team of facilitators, work sessions with the

technical coordinator and with the principal technical adviser of the EXCELENCIA project. Visits were arranged to schools in the departments of Carazo: the Elías Serrano school (regular mentor) and the Rey de Reyes school (multi-grade mentor); in the department of Rivas: the Sagrado Corazon school (multi-grade mentor), and in the department of Chinandega: the Darwin Vallecillo Teacher's School.

Mr. Hernán expressed very favorable views with regard to the coordinated work between the Ministry of Education, through its educational advisers and the EXCELENCIA Project with its facilitators in the different localities. He was also very positive in his assessment regarding the progress of the mentor schools in the educational components.

D) Coordination with NGOs and institutions

On August 30, the EXCELENCIA staff held a meeting to coordinate activities with the **Fundación Familia Padre Fabretto** and Mrs. Elena Edwards, Assistant Director of Development, and Mr. Arturo Barberena, in charge of Education. As a result of the meeting it was agreed to coordinate activities at local level between facilitators who serve the schools of San José de Cusmapa where Project and Foundation interventions are carried out.

Meetings have been held with the ALIANZAS Project, AMCHAM, Fundación Banco UNO and CISA Exportadora, to coordinate actions and establish commitments so that the schools served by these organizations are integrated into the EXCELENCIA network, and its facilitators participate in all the training courses of the Project. Important agreements are expected to be executed soon to provide some facilitators for EXCELENCIA, paid by some of these organizations, and the financing of some of the tools used in the active learning methodology such as the small blackboards and the mathematics baskets.

E) Participation in international events of EXCELENCIA members

1. Participation and report at the Forum "A decade of School Autonomy: Achievements and Challenges"

At the request of Mrs. Marta Palacio, Director-General of Decentralization in the MECD, the Manager of Evaluation was invited to speak on the inputs of the participants at the Forum "A decade of School Autonomy: Achievements and Challenges." The event was held on July 21 in the Camino Real Hotel in Managua with the participation of directors of autonomous schools, MECD Departmental Delegates, current authorities, former officials that promoted the School Autonomy process and experts on the subject.

2. Participation in the group of experts that analyzed the proposal of ECLAC, Santiago, Chile on the expansion of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Manager of Evaluation was invited to participate in the meeting of experts: "TOWARD THE EXPANSION OF THE FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MONITORING OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS" carried out in Santiago, Chile, on August 3 and 4, 2006, in the Celso Furtado Room of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

The objective of the event was to evaluate the progress in achieving the educational goals established in the Millennium Development Goals. It also sought to adjust the indicators to the realities of the region and maximize the viability of achieving the proposed goals.

Ways of expanding the Second Objective of the Millennium Development Goals, which seeks to achieve universal elementary education, were discussed at the meeting. ECLAC, with the collaboration of staff from UNESCO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, prepared a discussion document entitled “*Toward the expansion of the Second Objective of the Millennium. A proposal for Latin America and the Caribbean*”, whose draft submitted complementary proposals to the educational goals for discussion among the participants and its subsequent re-drafting.