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EXCELENCIA Quarterly Report
January 1, 2009 – March 31, 2009



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**

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

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

Main 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

Reporting Period: January 1st - March 31st, 2009

Budget: \$15,894,943

Start Date: November 30, 2005

End Date: September 30, 2009

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ACRONYMS

AED	Academy for Educational Development
AIR	American Institutes for Research
APA	Learn, Practice, Apply (<i>Aprendo, Practico, Aplico</i>)
BASE	Basic Education and Training Program II
COP	Chief of Party
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
EQUIP	Education Quality Improvement Program
EXCELENCIA	Expansion of the Excellence Centers in Nicaragua with Emphasis on the APA (Learn, Practice and Apply) Methodology
MINED	Ministry of Education
PRONICASS	Nicaraguan Support to the Social Sector Program
SO	Strategic Objective
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
RAAN	Autonomous Region of the North Atlantic
RAAS	Autonomous Region of the South Atlantic
EIB	Bilingual Intercultural Education
FADCANIC	Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast
TEPCE	Educational Evaluation, Planning and Training Workshops (Original training method created by MINED)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the recent last quarter of 2008, the Project entered its final stage of implementation. This included planning how to strengthen institutionalization of the Project's approach, while at the same time developing a strategy for closure that would allow for successful completion of objectives.

In this first quarter of 2009, 84 new schools were added to the network under the expansion objective-- 81 public schools and three schools managed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or faith-based organizations (FBOs) – for a total of 2,953 network schools (99% of goal). The remaining one percent has not been added so far mostly due to delays caused by changes in MINED authorities in some regions. The few remaining schools will be added in the next quarter.

During this quarter, EXCELENCIA/USAID trained 9,330 people (7,069 women and 2,261 men). In order to plan implementation of the Project's approach during the school year, the training program began with a first series of technical meetings with regional authorities. These first technical meetings were combined with an initial training of educational authorities and mentor school principals on the strategy for early grades. This strategy is part of MINED's policy for bolstering the two earliest grades with the Battle for the First Grade and reinforcement of early learning to read and write. The Project has therefore continued to train and successfully develop its proposed reading and writing learning initiatives in network schools, which have been very well accepted by MINED and by teachers. In order to ensure inclusion of its educational approach on all levels, to facilitate institutionalization of its expansion model, and to provide input into the new competency-based curriculum, the Project has also participated in MINED's planning and training activities. Along these lines, it has supported MINED's workshops and initiatives to begin promoting the new curriculum, with corresponding texts slated for distribution to schools this year.

On the Caribbean Coast, the Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast (FADCANIC) has completed validation of Bilingual Intercultural Education (EIB) third and fourth grade materials for multigrade primary schools, and is beginning to train technical specialists to analyze and use these validation results. Likewise, it is in the process of reviewing and formatting fifth and sixth grade materials for their subsequent validation. Furthermore, it has begun working to generate real interest among international organizations in the regions in reproducing these texts, for use in the schools.

Project representatives continue to work on the different National Commissions established by MINED for implementation of its policies. Presence on the commissions has allowed the Project to contribute to national education policy decision-making. Project facilitators continue to participate in monthly Educational Evaluation, Planning and Training Workshops (TEPCE) in the regions, the majority of which are held in Project mentor schools.

The 2007 Annual Study was reproduced and distributed. The 2008 results of third grade student reading and mathematics academic achievement tests within the framework of the new curriculum have been analyzed, as is a baseline test carried out in 2008 on the Caribbean Coast in third grade reading and mathematics. The Project has also begun to use its new easy-access database, which allows for quick consultation by any user of the information it generates.

Under the component the Excelencia model school approach to NGO- and FBO-managed schools, three new schools have been added, for a total of 321 schools, that is 21 schools above the established goal. As planned, training in APA methodology use and in first grade priority activities has continued with principals and teachers in these schools. Educational materials needed for application of APA components are also being distributed.

This quarter, supplies were distributed to network schools, with expenditures totaling US\$ 254,104.53. Distribution of materials officially commenced with an event at the Benjamín Zeledón School in which the United States Ambassador made a symbolic presentation of the supplies to the Ministry of Education.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

I. Result Number 1: Expansion of the network of EXCELENCIA schools that apply the APA Methodology

A) School Network Expansion

In the first quarter of 2009, EXCELENCIA/USAID added 88 new schools to the network (three subsidized and 81 public), for a total of 2,953 participating schools, or 99% of the end goal for number of schools in the EXCELENCIA network. This set of schools includes 321 served by Component 4 (NGO and FBO managed schools), and 108 schools in the North and South Caribbean Autonomous Regions served by FADCANIC. Of the total number of schools served by EXCELENCIA, 387 are BASE schools (mentors) and 2,556 are neighboring schools (satellites).

Table No. 1. Schools Served by EXCELENCIA, per Quarter and Category, as of March 2009

Schools Served by EXCELENCIA per Quarter and Category								
	Feb. 2006	Jun. 2006	Sep. 2006	Dec. 2006	Mar. 2007	Jun. 2007	Sep. 2007	Dec. 2007
Public schools								
Mentor Schools	112	184	184	190	232	232	232	232
Satellite Schools	528	526	749	930	899	1,327	1,473	1,530
Sub-Tot. Public								
NGO and FBO managed schools								
Mentor Schools								
Satellite Schools								
Sub-Total Result 4								
Total	640	710	933	1,120	1,131	1,559	1,705	1,762

(cont.)

Schools Served by EXCELENCIA per Quarter and Category												
	Mar. 2008	Jun. 2008	Sep. 2008	Dec. 2008	Mar. 2009							
Public schools												
Mentor Schools	245	245	250	339	339							
Satellite Schools	1,795	2,069	2,179	2,212	2,293							
Sub-Tot. Public	2,040	2,314	2,429	2,551	2,632							
NGO and FBO managed schools												
Mentor Schools	41	45	48	48	48							
Satellite Schools	226	266	270	270	273							
Sub-Total Result 4	267	311	318	318	321							
Total	2,307	2,625	2,747	2,869	2,953							

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID Project, March 2009.

Table No. 2 shows the distribution of schools in the EXCELENCIA/USAID network, by type and department, as of March 2009.

Table No. 2. EXCELENCIA 'S Network Schools per Type and Department

Department	School Type				Status	
	Multi-grade	Multi-grade Bilingual	Regular	Regular Bilingual	Mentor Schools	Satellite schools
Boaco	104	0	21	0	11	114
Carazo	83	0	38	0	17	104
Chinandega	153	0	90	0	27	216
Chontales	104	0	33	0	15	122
Esteli	84	0	39	0	14	109
Granada	70	0	37	0	17	90
Jinotega	181	0	35	0	30	186
Leon	127	0	64	0	35	156
Madriz	105	0	22	0	18	109
Managua	91	0	190	0	41	240
Masaya	47	0	65	0	17	95
Matagalpa	169	0	57	0	28	198
Nueva Segovia	175	0	31	0	25	181
Raan	63	30	35	21	27	122
Raas	231	10	60	13	33	281
Rio San Juan	98	0	18	0	13	103
Rivas	111	0	48	0	19	140
Total	1996	40	883	34	2566	387

Source: EXCELENCIA Project, March 2009.

Table No. 3 shows distribution by department of schools added to the Project network through NGOs and FBOs.

Table No.3. EXCELENCIA Schools Attended by NGOs by Department, Modality and Status

Table No. 3 EXCELENCIA Schools Attended by NGOs by Department, Modality and Status, September 2008							
Department	Modality				Status		Total
	Multigrade	Multigrade Bilingual	Regular	Regular Bilingual	Satellite	Mentor	
BOACO	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
CARAZO	0	0	6	0	5	1	6
CHINANDEGA	1	0	5	0	5	1	6
CHONTALES	0	0	5	0	4	1	5
ESTELI	0	0	3	0	2	1	3
JINOTEGA	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
LEON	8	0	24	0	26	6	32
MANAGUA	1	0	80	0	72	9	81
MASAYA	0	0	10	0	9	1	10
MATAGALPA	0	0	7	0	6	1	7
NUEVA SEGOVIA	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
RAAN	47	0	26	1	61	13	74
RAAS	66	4	22	2	80	14	94
Total	123	4	191	3	273	48	321

Source: Proyecto EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

Table No. 4 shows the number of schools managed by each of the organizations with which a contract has been signed, as of March 2009.

Table No. 4: Distribution of Schools, by Department and Organization, March 2009

Department	Alistar	FADCAN IC	Fe y Alegría	Fundación León 2000	Moravian Church	Centro Nehemías	Bluefields Vicariate	Total
Boaco	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Carazo	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	6
Chinandega	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	6
Chontales	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	5
Estelí	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
Jinotega	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
León	0	0	8	16	0	8	0	32
Managua	0	0	0	0	0	81	0	81
Masaya	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	10
Matagalpa	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	7
Nueva Segovia	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
RAAN	13	0	0	0	13	0	48	74
RAAS	0	21	0	0	4	5	64	94
Total	13	21	8	16	17	134	112	321

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID Project. March 2009

The graph below tracks the progress of the expansion of the EXCELENCIA network. As can be observed from the graph EXCELENCIA is well on target of reaching its expansion goal towards the end of the project.

Graph 1: Quarterly progress chart - Number of schools served by EXCELENCIA

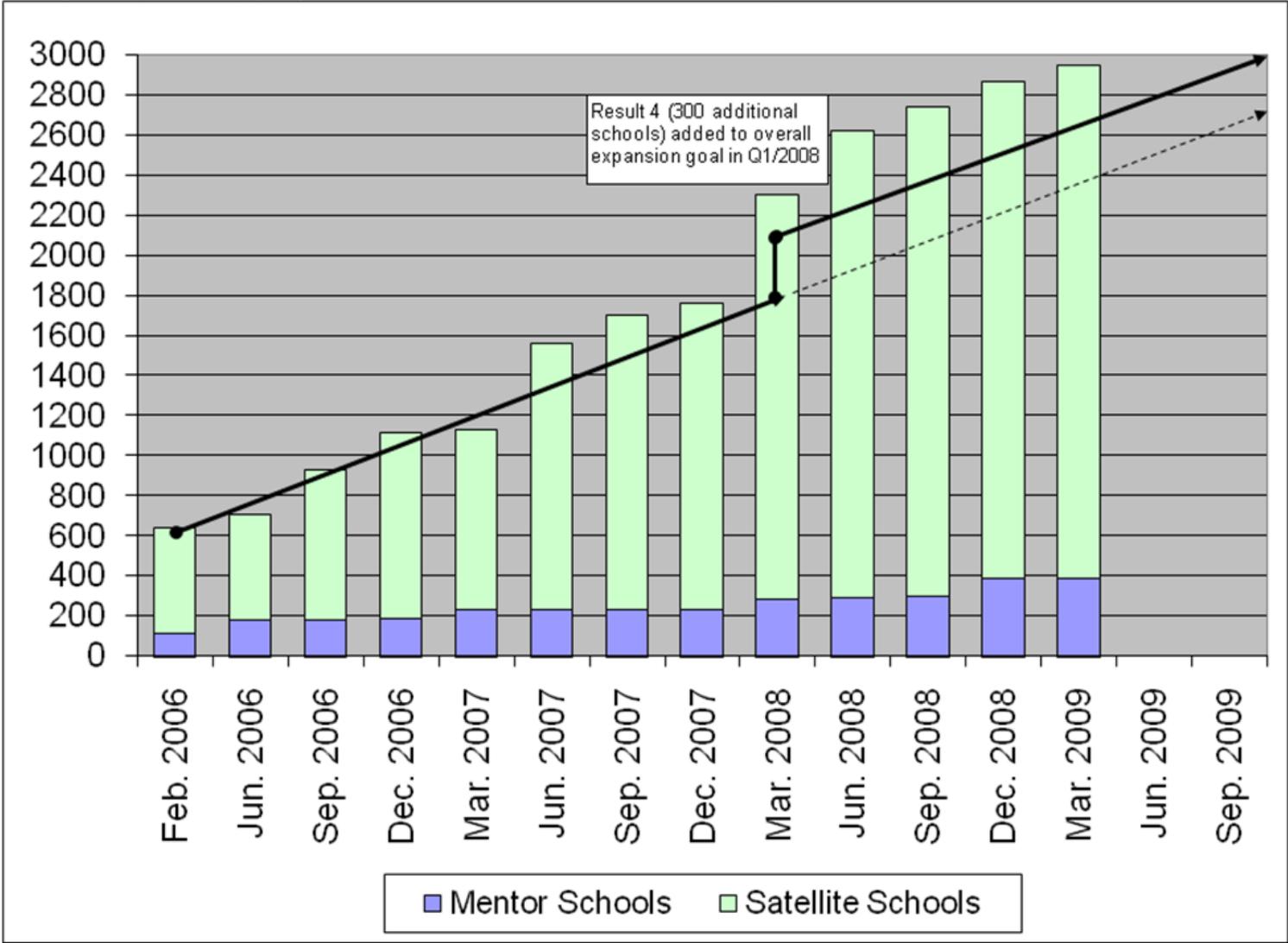


Table No. 5 shows progress in EXCELENCIA/USAID coverage, using preliminary data reported to date by the MINED Statistics Office. According to this data, in the first quarter of 2009, the Project served one in every three schools in the country (33%) and nearly half (48%) of the students in the country enrolled in primary education. Furthermore, 51% of primary education teachers work in EXCELENCIA/USAID network schools.

Table No. 5. EXCELENCIA Expansion Status as of March 2009

Coverage by Municipality	
Number of municipalities in the country	153
Number of municipalities covered by EXCELENCIA on March 09	151
% of municipalities covered by EXCELENCIA in 2009	99%
Coverage by schools	
Number of primary education schools (MINED 2008)	9,010
Number of schools served by EXCELENCIA as of March 2009	2,957
% of primary schools served by EXCELENCIA as of March 2009	33%
Coverage by student enrollment	
Total of initial enrollment in primary education 2008	943,654
Total of enrollment at EXCELENCIA schools as of March 2009	454,511
% of enrollment at EXCELENCIA schools as of March 2009	48%
Coverage by teacher	
Total number of primary education teachers 2008	32,211
Number of teachers at EXCELENCIA schools as of March 2009	16,491
% of Teachers at EXCELENCIA schools as of March 2009	51%

Source: MINED Statistics Directorate and EXCELENCIA. All records as of March 2009

In previous quarterly reports, the total number of primary school teachers was determined using data available in MINED, current through 2007. MINED has since updated its information to include teachers who joined the educational system in 2008. Since MINED has not officially confirmed primary education enrollment data for the 2009 school year, 2008 data continues to be used as official data.

Table No. 6 shows enrollment in NGO- and FBO-managed schools.

Table No.6 Enrollment and schools served by NGOs

NGO	No. of Schools	Girls' enrollment	Total enrollment
ALISTAR	13	1,177	2,449
FADCANIC	21	1,416	2,925
FE Y ALEGRIA	9	366	764
FUNDACION LEON	16	1,413	2,978
IGLESIA MORAVA	17	1,435	2,650
NEHEMIAS	137	8,018	16,874
VICARIATO BLUEFIELDS	112	2,456	5,200
Total	325	16,281	33,840

Source: Proyecto EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

As of March 2009, a total of 16,491 teachers (14,064 women and 2,427 men) were working in the EXCELENCIA/USAID network schools. Table No. 7 shows teachers by department and gender, including teachers who work in NGO- and FBO- managed schools.

Table No.7 Teachers at network schools by gender and department

Departments	Female	Male	Total
Boaco	479	66	545
Carazo	500	121	621
Chinandega	1,283	166	1,449
Chontales	511	54	565
Esteli	640	42	682
Granada	689	117	806
Jinotega	832	176	1,008
Leon	865	99	964
Madriz	353	79	432
Managua	2,316	353	2,669
Masaya	941	198	1,139
Matagalpa	1,144	203	1,347
Nueva Segovia	764	114	878
Raan	702	251	953
Raas	1,065	217	1,282
Rio San Juan	303	87	390
Rivas	677	84	761
Total	14,064	2,427	16,491

Source: preliminary MINED data. March 2009.

B. Training

In the first quarter of 2009, training events supported by EXCELENCIA/USAID reached 9,330 people (7,069 women and 2,261 men). Events in the regions were used both for technical planning meetings with departmental and municipal advisors and delegates, as well as for delivery of an initial training to principals concerning work on first grade reading and writing projects. Specific trainings on the reading projects were then subsequently held in each department.

New schools added this quarter also received corresponding training in the APA method. EXCELENCIA/USAID supported MINED's regional workshops on curricular transformation. At the same time, Component 4 continued the training plan established with schools in its domain; trainings explored the different components of the Project's educational approach.

Tables No. 8 and 9 describe the distribution of training activities carried out by Project Components, according to topic, length of time, and participant gender.

Table No. 8. Training in the Pedagogical Area, Component 1

TRAINING PARTICIPANTS Jan.-March 2009 by Event, Gender, and Duration			
Name of Event	2 Days		Total people
	Female	Male	
FIRST TECHNICAL MEETING AND PLANNING WORKSHOP ON WORKING WITH THE FIRST GRADE.	739	261	1,000
DEPARTMENTAL WORKSHOP IN SUPPORT OF CURRICULAR TRANSFORMATION.	1,174	300	1,474
LOCAL FIRST AND SECOND GRADE WORKSHOPS.	2,419	449	2,868
WORKSHOPS ON APA STRENGTHENING IN NEW SCHOOLS.	217	82	299
TOTAL	4,549	1,092	5,641

Source: Proyecto EXCELENCIA/USAID., March 2009

Table No. 9 shows training activities carried out during the quarter by Component 4 for schools managed by NGOs or FBOs.

Table No. 9 Training participants by number of days and gender

Number of Days		1 Day		2 Days		3 Days		
NGO	Name of the Event	M	F	M	F	M	F	Total
ALISTAR	REGIONAL GATHERINGS WITH THE MORAVIAN CHURCH AND ALISTAR.					5	17	22
ALISTAR	PROJECT WORKSHOP N°1 – MY OWN NAME	3	25					28
ALISTAR	WORKSHOP ON USING THE MATH BASKET.	4	28					32
FADCANIC	REGIONAL GATHERINGS WITH FADCANIC.					1	25	26
FADCANIC	WORK SESSION WITH PARENTS.	20	138					158
FADCANIC	APA METHODOLOGY STRENGTHENING SESSIONS.	24	134					158
FADCANIC	WORK SESSION WITH STUDENT GOVERNMENT.	39	57					96
FE Y ALEGRIA	TRAINING WORKSHOP ON MY OWN NAME.	3	12					15
FE Y ALEGRIA	COORDINATION MEETING WITH CHIEF TECHNICAL SPECIALIST.	3	6					9
FE Y ALEGRIA	WORKSHOP ON APA METHODOLOGY AND CURRICULAR TRANSFORMATION.	3	15					18
FUNDACION LEON	REGIONAL GATHERINGS WITH FE Y ALEGRIA AND FUNDACIÓN LEÓN 2000.						18	18
FUNDACION LEON	CRA EXCHANGE	9	25					34
FUNDACION LEON	WORKSHOPS WITH TEACHERS ON THE APA METHODOLOGY.	1	8	1	75			85
IGLESIA MORAVA	TRAINING IN MY OWN NAME AND THE MATH BASKET.	4	33	1	8			46
IGLESIA MORAVA	TRAINING IN PEDAGOGICAL COMPONENTS.	3	42	2	16			63
NEHEMIAS	TRAININGS IN MY OWN NAME – FIRST GRADE.	17	245					262
NEHEMIAS	QUALITY CIRCLES.	5	31					36

NEHEMIAS	REGIONAL GATHERINGS WITH THE <i>NEHEMIAS CENTER</i> .					9	25	34
NEHEMIAS	APA METHODOLOGY AND COOPERATIVE LEARNING.	181	939					1,120
VICARIATO BLUEFIELDS	TEACHER TRAINING IN PEDAGOGICAL COMPONENTS/APA METHODOLOGY.					99	106	205
VICARIATO BLUEFIELDS	TRAINING FOR MEMBERS OF SCHOOL COUNCILS.			357	199			556
VICARIATO BLUEFIELDS	TRAININGS FOR STUDENT GOVERNMENTS.			361	288			649
VICARIATO BLUEFIELDS	REGIONAL GATHERINGS WITH THE BLUEFIELDS APOSTOLIC VICARIATE.					14	5	19
Total		319	1,738	722	586	128	196	3,689

Source: Component 4 EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

Technical Meetings

Component 1 held the first series of technical planning meetings with departmental and municipal authorities. It also included mentor school principals in these meetings, for planning of "Battle for the First Grade" activities, in keeping with the Project's proposed reading and writing projects.

Table No. 10 describes the technical meetings held throughout the country, including dates and participants for each.

Table No. 10. Technical Meetings Held this Quarter and Participants

Department	Municipality	Date	# of participants		
			F	M	T
1. RAAS	Nueva Guinea	Feb. 12 & 13	15	9	24
2. León	León	Feb. 19 & 20	36	13	49
3. Carazo	Jinotepe	Feb. 18 & 19	20	15	35
4. Estelí	Estelí	Feb. 24 & 25	91	14	105
5. Managua	Managua	March 5 & 6	78	18	96
6. Jinotega	Jinotega	Feb. 12 & 13	48	16	64
7. Chinandega	Chinandega	Feb. 19 & 29	137	36	173
8. Madriz	Somoto	March 3 & 4	30	21	51
9. Matagalpa	Matagalpa	Feb. 23 & 24	56	25	81
10. Granada	Granada	March 5 & 6	63	14	77
11. Masaya	Masaya	March 4 & 6	24	30	54
12. Rivas	Rivas	February 12 & 13	36	8	44
13. Nueva Segovia	Ocotol		30	14	44
14. Río San Juan	El Castillo	February 19 & 20	26	8	34
15. Boaco	Boaco	February 13 & 14	30	8	38
16. Chontales	Juigalpa	February 16 & 17	19	12	31
TOTAL	-	-	739	261	1,000

Source: Proyecto EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

Trainings with New Schools in the APA Method

As part of the expansion strategy, facilitators planned and delivered trainings on the APA method for newly added schools, as detailed in Table No. 11.

Table No. 11. Place and number of APA training participants

Department	Participants			Dates
	F	M	Total	
Estelí	49	15	64	March 13 & 14
Madriz	23	16	39	February 19 & 20
Nueva Segovia	32	28	60	February 23 & 24
Chinandega	113	23	136	February 23 & 24
Total	217	82	299	

Source. Proyecto EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

Local Workshops on Reading and Writing Projects for Early Grades

This quarter, the Project maintained its support for MINED's Battle for the First Grade, continuing to train network schools in implementation of projects proposed by EXCELENCIA/USAID for student learning of reading and writing.

In the workshops, teachers reinforced their knowledge of effective reading and writing teaching methods, and learned to prepare first grade instructional materials. They also learned how resources such as music and drawing could be used as tools for teaching, and received copies of modules prepared by EXCELENCIA/USAID for these techniques.

Table No. 12 shows departments, participants and dates of these workshops this quarter.

Table No. 12. Local Workshops on First Grade Projects

Department	Participants		
	F	M	Total
Estelí	269	41	310
Managua	86	13	99
Granada	142	39	181
Chinandega	524	85	609
Carazo	225	59	284
Río San Juan	131	47	178
RAAS (Zelaya Central)	151	29	180
Rivas	891	136	1,027
Total	2,419	449	2,868

Source. Proyecto EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

Quality Circles

In some departments, local trainings were held in EXCELENCIA/USAID network school quality circles, organized by the teachers themselves. Training topics were selected by teachers according to need. Table No. 13 displays departments and participants for these quality circles.

Table No 13. Departments and Participants in Teacher Quality Circles

Department	Participants		
	F	M	T
Rivas	73	3	76
Chontales	18	7	25
Boaco	39	9	48
Managua	53	13	66
TOTAL	183	32	215

Source. Proyecto EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

C) Monitoring and Technical Support Visits to Network Schools

This quarter, Project facilitators made a total of 294 technical support visits to network schools. These visits were made for the most part in coordination with departmental and municipal advisors and delegates. These technical support visits not only serve to advise and ensure quality in the network schools, but also to transfer skills to local MINED personnel for monitoring and supporting that quality.

Table No. 14 shows the number of visits made by Project facilitators this quarter in the Pacific departments.

Table No. 14. *Technical Assistance Visits in the Pacific by Mentor School Principals and Departmental and Municipal Advisors, by Department*

Department	Number of Visits
León	14
Masaya	11
Jinotega	5
Matagalpa	24
Granada	30
Río San Juan	16
Zelaya Central	6
Carazo	28
Rivas	16
Managua	34
Boaco	17
Chontales	23
Chinandega	20
Estelí	14
Nueva Segovia	12
Madriz	24
Sub Total	294

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

D) Distribution of Fungible Supplies to Schools

This quarter saw the first distribution of fungible supplies to network schools, for which all of the Project's transportation resources were utilized. The distribution began with a symbolic presentation to MINED of the supplies that would be delivered to the schools. In a solemn act at the Benjamín Zeledón School (*Instituto Benjamín Zeledón*) in the city of Managua, United States Ambassador Robert Callahan presented the Minister of Education with the supplies, thereby commencing the national distribution process. During the presentation ceremony, the Minister of Education paid public homage to the EXCELENCIA/USAID Project, specifically to Chief Technical Advisor Oscar Mogollón, highlighting his years of service to education in Nicaragua.

Fungible supplies, math baskets, banners, small boards and books were distributed to school libraries, with a total value of U\$ 254,104.53. This will be the last delivery of materials, as the budget allocated for this area has been exhausted.

49 mentor schools and 250 satellite schools managed by NGOs and FBOs received the materials, as did 319 mentor schools, 1,044 satellite schools, and 30 resource centers under the expansion goal managed by Project Component 1.

E) Expansion Activities in the Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions (FADCANIC)

Training Activities

Table No. 15. Training Activities in the Regions this Quarter

	Activity	Date	Male	Female	TOTAL
RAAN	In Puerto Cabezas Regional workshop on APA strengthening and the First Grade Network, with participants representing the seven municipalities served by the Project.	March 3 & 4	23	22	45
RAAS	In Bluefields Working session with teachers in professionalization courses on reinforcement of the APA method and the active role of the child.	January	45	53	98
TOTAL			68	75	143

Source: FADCANIC, March 2009

Inclusion in strengthening of the First Grade Network.

The workshop held in the RAAN has strengthened the First Grade Network, which was created with MINED's guidance in the Battle for the First Grade. This same workshop will be held in the RAAS in May.

Teachers participate in the TEPCE held at the end of each month.

Teachers participate in the monthly planning and evaluation conducted in each municipality. This activity allows them to incorporate activities described in the Project's Annual Operational Plan, in keeping with MINED's recommendations and guidelines.

Project technical teams also participate in MINED activities.

The EXCELENCIA/FADCANIC technical team participated in MINED's training workshops on "New Transformed Programs and the New Curriculum" for primary education, which include APA methodology.

Classroom visits made to mentor and satellite schools in the RAAN and the RAAS.

This quarter, FADCANIC technical specialists made a total of 83 visits to the same number of schools, providing classroom technical assistance to a total of 283 teachers.

Table No. 16. Support Visits in the RAAN and RAAS this Quarter

Municipality	No. of Schools	Nº of trained teachers		
		M	F	total
Siuna	8	0	7	7
Mulukukú	1	0	2	2
Rosita	12	3	16	19
Bonanza	10	9	5	14
Prinzapolka	9	11	13	24
Waspam	9	9	24	33
Bilwi	15	5	28	33
Subtotal	64	37	95	132
Bluefields	11	13	101	114
Corn Island	3		24	24
Desembocadura	5	3	10	13
Subtotal	19	16	135	151
Total	83	53	230	283

Source: FADCANIC, March 2009

Teams of technical specialists from the Project and from MINED, in complete coordination, conducted classroom visits in which they provided direct assistance to teachers.

This quarter, the USAID representative, Alicia Slate, joined by the FADCANIC specialist Elba Tilleth, visited four schools in the municipality of Waspam and four schools in the municipality of Puerto Cabezas. In the RAAS, Connie Johnson and Alicia Slate visited schools in the municipalities of Bluefields (two), Kukra Hill (two), Laguna de Perlas (one) and Orinoco (two), joined by EXCELENCIA Project technical team staff. The visitors observed teachers' activities in the classrooms, particularly in early grades, as well as student and teacher use of the Resource Centers.

During their visits, USAID education representatives Connie Johnson and Alicia Slate conducted a work agenda consisting of interviews with educational authorities from MINED, the Regional Government Secretariat, and the Superintendent's Office of the Moravian Church. They also visited the Normal School, to exchange opinions concerning progress in the new curricular transformation with an EIB perspective, as well as the impact and other relevant aspects of EIB itself. In the schools, they interviewed management staff in order to evaluate impact and significant changes in educational quality resulting from application of APA methodology, as well as the effectiveness of expansion to satellite schools. In the RAAN, priority was given to verifying construction of the Hermana Teresa de Jesús Rosales School in Santa Marta and the Teodoro Rivera School in Kisalaya.

Other Activities:

Coordination with AIR has been maintained, in monitoring the construction of two schools in the RAAN: in Santa Marta and in Kisalaya.

Local Support Committees were formed in every community. Also, a Municipal Committee was formed in Waspam and a Regional Commission was formed in Puerto Cabezas.

An operational plan was developed for technical training and support activities in the schools under construction. As of April 1st, a community promoter has been appointed to serve the two communities, in coordination with the RAAN Coordinator and the General Coordinator.

The Coordinators of the RAAN and the RAAS and the General Coordinator work in conjunction (they are invited to meetings) with the Education Secretariats of the Regional Governments. They also maintain close working relations with MINED.

A published edition of the systematization report from the first year of Project implementation has been completed and returned to the design company for color and photography changes.

In order to update the situational assessment of the schools, data collection has continued.

F) Achievements under Result 1

- *84 new schools added to the Project network.* The remaining schools needed to meet the goal will be added next quarter as new satellites of mentor schools with the most experience. This way, they will have a certain amount of time and assistance for incorporation of pedagogical components.
- *9,330 people (7,069 women and 2,261 men) trained this quarter.* Of these, 5,641 people were trained by Component 1 and 3,689 by Component 4.
- *First delivery of materials in the 2009 school year.* The Project delivered fungible supplies to 1,692 network schools with a total value of US\$ 254,104.53.
- *The institutionalization process has continued in close coordination with MINED.* The Project has continued to play a fundamental role in supporting regional authorities in organizing the educational core groups of the regions, ensuring that as many mentor schools as possible are designated as BASE schools for educational modules in the regions.

II. Result No. 2. New Curriculum Based on Competencies for Primary Education that includes Bilingual Intercultural Education validated and incorporated into the National Educational System

A) Support for MINED in the Final Production Phase of the New Curriculum

EXCELENCIA/USAID has continued to support MINED in development and application of the new curriculum. MINED has begun an initial phase of teacher training in the overall contents and framework of the curriculum, while corresponding texts are being printed and distributed.

This quarter, the Project participated in the National Workshop on Curricular Transformation from January 13th to 16th, in which a group of national and local authorities and school principals received orientation in the new curriculum's methodology. Subsequently, EXCELENCIA/USAID provided technical and financial support for regional workshops on this topic. At these workshops, departmental and municipal authorities and numerous principals of schools outside the Project network received initial training in the APA methodological approach, as well as documents explaining its key pedagogical components. 1,474 people participated in these first regional workshops, as shown in Table No. 17.

Table No. 17: Regional Workshops on Curricular Transformation with MINED

Department	Participants			Date
	F	M	Total	
Managua	57	8	65	Jan. 19 to 22
Chinandega	226	156	382	Jan. 19 to 23
Rivas	891	136	1027	Jan. 26 to 30
Total	1174	300	1474	

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

Delivery to MINED of the New, Final Version of Formatted Texts

The final versions of the Natural Science, Civics, Math, Language and Literature, and Social Studies texts were delivered to MINED's Office for Curricular Transformation. These materials have been progressively modified by MINED via repeated consultation and correction.

EXCELENCIA/USAID, despite having completed its task in this area, has continued to support MINED in incorporating modifications, in order to produce these final, and we hope definitive, versions of the materials.

B) Production of Bilingual Intercultural Education (EIB) Materials in the Caribbean Autonomous Regions

Validation of Third and Fourth Grade Materials

A report was prepared based on quantitative results from validation of the Third and Fourth Grade Guides. A series of trainings have been scheduled in April to allow technical teams to analyze and interpret this data and prepare a final report.

The Fifth and Sixth Grade Learning Guides for first and second languages in multigrade schools are currently in the final formatting phase. The guides for mathematics are in the process of being translated and adapted to the local context. Table No. 18 shows the production status of the Fifth and Sixth Grade Learning Guides.

Table 18. Production Status of Fifth and Sixth Grade EIB Guides

Learning Guides	Formatting Completed	In the Formatting Phase	In the Translation Phase	In the Contextualization Phase
Spanish as a Second Language	5th & 6th of RAAS	5th & 6th of RAAN		
English as a Second Language	5th & 6th of RAAS			
Miskitu L1		5th & 6th of RAAN		
Panamahka L1		5th & 6th of RAAN		
Twahka L1		5th & 6th of RAAN		
Math and Spanish		5th & 6th of RAAS		
Math and English			5th & 6th of RAAS	
Math and Miskitu				5th & 6th of RAAN
Math and Panamahka				5th & 6th of RAAN
Math and Twahka			5th & 6th of RAAN	5th & 6th of RAAN

Source: FADCANIC, March 2009

Negotiation of Funding with DANIDA by the Education Secretariats of Regional Governments, for Validation and Reproduction of Materials

The Education Secretariats of the Governments in the Autonomous Regions have included funding negotiations with DANIDA in their Annual Operational Plan, for reproduction of the EXCELENCIA Project's Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Grade Learning Guides for multigrade schools, as well as for validation of the Fifth and Sixth Grade Learning Guides.

C) Achievements under Result 2

- The Project has begun to provide ongoing support to MINED for initial activities prior to distribution and application of the new curriculum, in order to secure and consolidate

achievements made thus far, and to ensure that the new curriculum is used in a way that respects the Learn, Practice and Apply approach with which it was conceived and developed. This is the foundation for full adoption of the Project's approach to education in the country.

- On the Caribbean Coast, production of fifth and sixth grade materials was completed. These materials are now in the translation and formatting phases, and negotiations with international organizations working in the region have begun, in order to secure funding for their reproduction and distribution.

III. Result 3: Longitudinal Studies and Additional Research to Assess Project Impact and Field Studies to Set up Effective Channels to Improve Transition to Primary Education

A) Studies

1. 2007 Annual Study

In the first quarter of 2009, 2,000 copies of the 2007 Annual Study final report were printed and distributed. Distribution centered primarily on mentor schools, according to criteria described in Table No. 19.

Table No. 19: Distribution Criteria for the 2007 Study Notebook

School Classification	# of enrolled students	# of schools	# of Issues per School	Total of Issues
School type A	0 -100	56	3	168
School type B	101 - 500	192	4	768
School type C	501 - 999	78	7	546
School type D	> 1000	12	10	120
Sub - Total		338		1,602
Issues given to top MINED officials				378
Issues in stock EXCELENCIA/USAID				20
Total				2,000

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

2. The 2008 Annual Study

This quarter, statistical analysis of test results from the 2008 Annual Study was completed, and corresponding databases were received. The analysis compared results from the 2007 and 2008 Studies.

As a preliminary look at results from this study, Table 20 shows a brief comparative summary, with classification of participating schools.

Table No. 20: Average Scores, by Groups of Participating Schools

Subject	Group of Schools	Study 2007		Study 2008	
		N	Score	N	Score
Spanish	Multigrade Schools (All - Excelencia)	432	484.7	400	502.3
	New Excelencia schools - 2007	221	492.8	322	499.0
	Pioneer schools - 2006 or before	836	502.5	849	514.8
	Non Excelencia Schools (Public)	673	495.2	737	511.1
	General Average	2162	500.0	2308	509.2
Math	Multigrade Schools (All - Excelencia)	461	486.3	409	505.3
	New Excelencia schools - 2007	257	488.0	320	497.0
	Pioneer schools - 2006 or before	888	503.0	864	511.5
	Non Excelencia Schools (Public)	746	498.2	738	508.8
	General Average	2162	500.0	2331	507.6

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID, March 2009

Overall, in comparing the 2007 study with the more recent 2008 study, a slight increase in results can be observed among students evaluated in both subject areas. In terms of absolute averages, students from schools in the EXCELENCIA pioneer group come out on top; that is, students from schools included in the project in 2006 or before. On the other hand, the multigrade schools (all of which are EXCELENCIA schools) demonstrate a greater relative percent increase as compared to other groups.

3. March 2008 Pre-Test Study in NGO- and FBO-Managed Schools (Component 4)

In March 2008, academic achievement tests in Spanish and mathematics were given to students starting fourth grade, in order to establish a baseline for new educational initiatives promoted by the EXCELENCIA Project in this group of non-public schools.

In order to ensure the test's consistency with the curriculum used in this sub-set of schools, the Project re-designed tests by adapting third grade reading comprehension and math tests developed for the 2007 Study of public schools where the new curriculum was being used. In order to guarantee a rigorous process, this adaptation process required consultation with MINED specialists and teachers from the schools. The following tables provide a brief summary of study results.

Table No. 21: Student Distribution by Department

DEPARTMENT	# of Students	Average
Carazo	42	2.8
Chinandega	31	2.1
León	179	11.9
Managua	519	34.4
Masaya	90	6.0
Matagalpa	38	2.5
RAAN	327	21.7
RAAS	284	18.8
Total	1,510	100.2

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

Table No. 22: Student Distribution by NGO

NGO	# of Students	Average
ALISTAR	182	12.1
FADCANIC	258	17.1
FE Y ALEGRIA	67	4.4
FUNDACION LEON	112	7.4
IGLESIA MORAVA	93	6.2
NEHEMIAS	734	48.6
VICARIATO BLUEFIELDS	64	4.2
Total	1510	100.0

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

Table No. 23: Student Distribution by Gender, Area and Type

GENDER	# of Students	Average
FEMALE	771	51.1
MALE	739	48.9
Total	1510	100.0
AREA		
Rural	458	30.3
Urban	1052	69.7
Total	1510	100.0
TYPE		
Multigrade Elementary	91	6.0
Regular Elementary	1419	94.0
Total	1510	100.0

Fuente: EXCELENCIA/USAID. Marzo 2009

Table No. 24: Distribution of Student Achievement by Performance Level and Gender (Mathematics)

Description	Not Satisfactory		Satisfactory		Very Satisfactory		TOTAL	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
# of students	380	420	352	344	7	7	739	771
% at a grade level	47.5	52.5	50.6	49.4	50.0	50.0	48.9	51.1
% gender	51.4	54.5	47.6	44.6	0.9	0.9	100.0	100.0

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

Table No. 25: Distribution of Student Achievement by Performance Level and Gender (Spanish)

Description	Not Satisfactory		Satisfactory		Very Satisfactory		TOTAL	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
# of students	253	217	427	465	59	89	739	771
% at a grade level	53.8	46.2	47.9	52.1	39.9	60.1	48.9	51.1
% gender	34.2	28.1	57.8	60.3	8.0	11.5	100.0	100.0

Source: EXCELENCIA/USAID. March 2009

B) Monitoring

Monitoring has consisted of organization and coordination with the Project's different technical areas, as well as system data entry, processing, debugging and analysis of all information, for timely availability of data to the different institutions using it for decision-making.

At the close of the first quarter of 2009, the system contained information pertaining to the 2,957 schools in the EXCELENCIA network, with basic data including: type, area, status, geographical location, identification code, enrollment and teachers. With this number of schools served, EXCELENCIA has achieved 99% of its target, as per contractual commitments with the donor.

Likewise, the Project has updated its records on school self-evaluations, which were collected this quarter by teams of facilitators traveling throughout the country to gather documentation.

C) Achievements Under 3

- *The 2007 Study final report was published and distributed.* Its distribution and dissemination to national, departmental and municipal MINED authorities, and above all to mentor schools, provides a pedagogical tool for improving quality of education over the course of the current school year.

- *Databases are now available with analysis of third grade student test results in schools participating in the 2008 Study.* With this information, data will be interpreted, and partial and technical reports prepared, edited and published for different audiences in the second quarter of the year.

- *Databases are now available with analysis of results from March 2008 tests of students starting fourth grade in NGO- and FBO-managed schools (Component 4).* With this information, graph reports by school will be prepared next quarter, providing important pedagogical input for improving educational quality in these schools.

- *A preliminary document is now available describing preparation, updating, systematization and delivery of the academic achievement tests.* (See Annex I).

- *Progress has been made in debugging databases, processes and procedures for the Project Database Management and Consultation System.* Likewise, training for different users was completed, as was a User's Manual for proper use of this tool.

- *An executive summary was prepared in Spanish and English of all EXCELENCIA activities designed to assess student academic achievement.* (See Annex II).

IV. Result 4: Expanding the number of privately managed schools applying the model school approach throughout Nicaragua.

Achievements under Result 4

The start of a new academic year - regional trainings.

Similar to the component 1 Pedagogical Area of the EXCELENCIA Project, in the first quarter Component 4 began the 2009 school year with regional trainings. The regional trainings were designed with a focus on the needs of each particular NGO and the cultural context in which their schools work. The regional trainings were even more specifically designed to support the efforts of partner NGOs (total 3) in the Atlantic Coast. This was the third in a series of trainings brought to NGO technical staff (as well as school principals in this case) by Component 4. However after serious reflection and consideration of school results during the first year of the project, it became clear that a personalized attention should be paid to each of the NGOs and

regions in which they work. Five trainings took place in total during the month of February 2009 (Feb. 4-6 Managua with Vicariato, Feb. 4-6 Managua with Centro Nehemias, Feb. 10-12 Leon with Fun. Leon 2000 and Fe y Alegría, Feb. 18- 20 Puerto Cabezas with Iglesia Morava and Alistar, and Feb. 18-20 Bluefields with FADCANIC), training a total of 120 people including coordinators, facilitators and technical staff of NGOs, school directors, sub directors, and teachers, as well as MINED representatives.

During the first month of the quarter (January 2009) ample time was dedicated to completing the analysis of the schools under Component 4 (based on criteria of the EXCELENCIA Project- Pedagogical Area). With these results, training materials were designed focusing on the math basket, first grade projects, cooperative work, as well as other pedagogical components - school libraries, student governments, parent committees, and quality circles. The Component 4 was able to depend on the practical, in school, pedagogical experience of the Component 4 Coordinators as well as support from the Pedagogical Area of the EXCELENCIA to create teaching guides. In addition, the project received administrative and financial support from the entire EXCELENCIA Project. NGO staff and school principals expressed great contentment with the trainings; they were particularly enthusiastic because the work with first grade gave them the opportunity to work with the new curriculum and how this can be implemented by means of the APA methodology.

The start of the academic year - the provision of education materials.

Fortunately, complementing the training, all school materials have been provided to Component 4 schools - this is to say that all 7 NGOs have received allocated school materials and have provided them to their respective schools. School materials included replenishment of supplies as well as small libraries for satellite schools. This has been a contribution well received from participating subsidized and private schools. The provision of these materials was through coordination with the Area of Materials of the EXCELENCIA Project. It is planned that in the next quarter, the Resource Centers promoted by the EXCELENCIA Project will be provided to the NGO selected schools. However, in order not to lose valuable time, during this quarter, in the month of March school level exchanges have been promoted between existing public EXCELENCIA schools with Resource Centers and the NGO selected private/ subsidized schools to receive the Resource Centers. These exchanges allow the sharing of valuable experiences as well as space to openly ask questions and suggest ideas for future action. Coupled with the provision of the pedagogical equipment for the Resource Centers and the exchanges, training events are in the process of being designed, to build capacity of staff that will be responsible for the Resource Centers (target for trainings April 2009). Schools were selected based on identified criteria of the EXCELENCIA Project- Pedagogical Area, most important in addition to infrastructure, being pedagogical leadership and assumed responsibility by the school principal.

School visits- updating information and supporting implementation.

Currently, the Area of Evaluation of the EXCELENCIA Project has received all auto evaluations and characterizations of Component 4 schools, provided by partner NGOs through their school level visits at the beginning of the quarter. Coordinators of Component 4 have continued to provide expertise at the school level, focusing on Mentor schools, through visits (total visits this quarter- 32). In addition, NGOs have been deepening the knowledge of the Aprendo Practico Aplico methodology and the Pedagogical Components - particularly the themes presented in the regional trainings during the month of March this quarter. A total of 195 trainings have been imparted this quarter, see Result 3 for more detailed information on Component 4 trainings. The NER/ Asunción/ Fe y Alegría has continued its second year of the pre-service teacher training program, with a total of 15 students. Most notable is students expressed understanding of the cultural context in which they are being trained to teach- the uniqueness of teaching in a multigrade, rural, classroom and the particular skills that are required of them to develop to be able to meet these education challenges (through application of the Pedagogical Components and APA methodology).

V. Construction component

A November 2008 program expansion tasks EXCELENCIA with rebuilding two schools destroyed by Hurricane Felix in a multi-purpose design that also offers protection to the community in the event of another hurricane. Moreover, through this component educational materials will be provided to other schools in the region through FADCANIC, which is also involved with community relations and training activities in this component.

In the first quarter, the project has concluded all preparatory activities for the school construction activities on the Atlantic Coast, including

- Finalizing contractual details,
- the competitive selection of a construction company,
- final coordination with local authorities, USAID, and the local communities.
- Organizing follow-up committees including the responsible governmental entity (FISE)

In early February construction activities commenced and have been continued apace throughout the first quarter. By the end of the third quarter the school in Santa Martha (municipality of Bilwi, RAAN) had been about 40% re-built and the school in Kisalaya, municipality Waspam, RAAN) had been re-built about 30%.

VI. Activities Planned for Next Quarter

Result 1: Expansion of APA Methodology

- The number of schools proposed by the end of the Project is expected to be reached next quarter. In order to do this, a number of excellent and very good mentor schools will be invited to add a new satellite school to their network.
- Monitoring and support visits will be made to mentor schools, in order to: advise the use of pedagogical components and APA; observe distribution of teaching materials; and support application of methods for improved reading and writing.
- The Project will continue to support MINED in implementing the Integrated Quality Education Model. EXCELENCIA/USAID will analyze how it can support MINED in training principals and teachers in the regions. In order to maximize limited funds, facilitators will offer support as trainers to the extent to which their own responsibilities allow.
- The Project will continue to support MINED in the Battle for the First Grade and in preparation and implementation of the National Forum on Rural Multigrade Education (*Foro Nacional sobre Educación Rural Multigrado*). At the forum, EXCELENCIA/USAID plans to share its contributions to this type of education in Nicaragua through the successive BASE I, Base II, and now EXCELENCIA projects.
- The Project expects to complete the EXCELENCIA/USAID Pedagogical Approach Manual, which will serve as a reference for training and overall institutionalization of the Project's methodology.

Caribbean Coast:

- The Project will continue analysis of validation of third and fourth grade materials, as well as final production of fifth and sixth grade materials.
- An activity will be held at the Santa Teresa de Jesús School in Santa Marta, RAAN on April 22nd, with attendance from regional and local authorities and the United States Ambassador.
- Support and training visits will continue to be made, in order to reinforce APA application in network schools.

Result 2: New Curriculum

At the central level, the Project will await MINED decisions, and will continue to participate in its commissions in order to ensure curriculum institutionalization and use.

Result 3: Studies and Assessment

- Scopes of Work will be prepared, and national consultants will be selected and hired, to support preparation of the 2008 Study final reports, both for Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region schools, as well as for schools in the rest of the country.
- The Informational Packet, to be submitted to USAID by the end of May 2009, will be prepared and sent for approval.
- The executive reports for the 2008 Study will be prepared and edited, both for schools served in the Pacific, Central and Northern Regions of the country, as well as for schools of the Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions.
- Graphed reports by school will be prepared, edited and distributed, for results of academic achievement testing of NGO- and FBO-managed school students (Component 4).
- Results of an analysis of formative evaluation testing in a sub-sample of NGO- and FBO-managed schools (Component 4) will be received from AIR Washington, in order to begin preparation of the final report.
- Statistical projections will continue to be developed and submitted to USAID, as input for preparation of the new 2009-2012 country strategy, which includes different indicators.
- Data will continue to be entered as input for the monitoring system.
- The last self-evaluation report will be prepared for schools served by the Pedagogical Area and Component 4.
- Identification of BASE and neighboring schools in the EXCELENCIA network will begin, according to MINED's system for core group development.

Result 4: Expanding the number of privately managed schools applying the model school approach throughout Nicaragua.

It is planned that in the next quarter, the Resource Centers promoted by the EXCELENCIA Project will be provided to the NGO selected schools.