



2021

# ANNUAL REPORT SNAPSHOT

*Sueños* 

Asociación Sueños / Friends of Sueños

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*Sueños* 

# About Us

Asociación Sueños (Sueños) is a community-based organization focused on stopping the cycle of child labor through education, in Antigua, Guatemala. Sueños is a preschool and primary school for children ages four to fourteen in preschool to sixth grade; in addition to education Sueños provides nutrition, social work, psychology, and parent workshops to the community.

Sueños works with indigenous children, many whose families moved to Antigua from rural Guatemala seeking economic opportunity. Parents work as street vendors, and many Sueños students help sustain the family economically.

## Mission

Sueños is a nonprofit organization that provides a safe space of empowerment, learning and collaboration for the children of street vendors in Antigua Guatemala through community-centered education.

## Vision

To provide the educational, social and emotional tools for children to complete primary education, and acquire a skill set to achieve economic autonomy, allowing them to achieve their goals, and stopping the cycle of child labor.



# Communities We Serve

The families we serve work as street vendors in Antigua, Guatemala. Families participate in various economic activities including shoe shining and selling candy, fruits, traditional fabrics and accessories, and lottery tickets.

Historically, families at Sueños have struggled to send their children to school because of the significant costs it adds to the household. Even when students have made it to school, they've faced discrimination based on their language, indigenous origins, and low socioeconomic status. Learning in Spanish, their second language and the only language offered in public school in Antigua, has also placed them at an educational disadvantage.

**92% of families enrolled in 2021 identify as indigenous people or speak a Mayan language.**

Guatemala is a linguistically diverse country with 22 Mayan languages and many more regional dialects spoken. There are 1.7 million K'iche' speakers in Guatemala.

Though most of Sueños students' first language is K'iche, there is no school in Antigua or the surrounding area that provides classes in K'iche or teachers that speak the language. Because of this severe language barrier, students are often unsuccessful in their first year of school, making them unlikely to learn the building blocks of literacy, which affects their future years of education negatively.

In 2021, 100% of Sueños students who had previously attended primary school at a local public school had failed at least one year of school

## **Sueños' approach of community-centered learning allows students to learn in both K'iche' and Spanish,**

while exploring topics that are important to their community. Their teachers are members of their community, creating trust and respect between families and the school. Parents are invited into the learning process through monthly workshops, parent-teacher conferences, and monthly visits to the center where they help in the kitchen or classroom.

Success for Sueños' students is envisioned as finishing primary school, and acquiring jobs that will provide them with economic stability, either through secondary education, various trades, or entrepreneurship.

Families participating in Sueños come from four departments (see map) -Quiché, Totonicapán, Solola & Sacatepequez



# Becoming A School

The idea to form an organization to support families working as street vendors began in 2014, when children were offered dance classes in the park from volunteers. The first version of the organization, named Camino A La Escuela (The Route to School), was founded formally in 2016. Almost two years after the founding of Camino a la Escuela, the organization found that there were new needs in the community, and better ways to provide for students of all ages.

In 2018, Camino a la Escuela changed its name to Sueños, which stands for Sembrando Unidos la Educación para los Niños (Sowing Together Education for the Children). In 2018, Sueños began to provide after school education and learning support to local students. Students arrived at Sueños in the afternoon for help with their homework, extra tutoring in math, literacy and social studies, and for a nutritional meal.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, only about 5% of students had regular contact with their public school teachers. The majority of students received weekly worksheets from school, but were provided with zero time virtually, in-person, or over the phone with a teacher. This meant that students were left to their own devices to learn any content from school in 2020. Since the majority of Sueños parents are illiterate, students were unable to learn without the help of Sueños.

Despite the fact that most primary public school students were able to complete their course work with Sueños' help, and all students who finished their course work were promoted, it was clear that their learning was negatively impacted by Covid-19. It was evident through students' very low grades and inability to complete their school work independently that they were not acquiring meaningful learning from schools in 2020.

Based on our observations of learning, our conversations with families, and a repeated interest from multiple parents, **in 2021 Sueños transitioned from an afterschool program and began providing formal education directly to families, taking over the role of the school through two programs.**

## Methodology

Community-centered education is the methodology at the core of Sueños' work and allows our program to increase educational equity and quality for students. In this methodology, students experience a bilingual learning environment where they can freely and proudly speak their indigenous language, with subjects taught by members of their ethnolinguistic community. Students explore issues that are important to their community through Project-Based Learning and connect their daily lived experiences to their learning through an interdisciplinary, contextualized, and culturally affirming curriculum. Students see their own identities reflected in Sueños leadership, as 80% of teachers come from the K'iche' community.

# Preschool Program

## Preschool Education

During the 2021 January-October school year, preschool education was provided for students ages 4-6 with a focus on early literacy skills, critical thinking, and self-esteem, as per our strategic goals (2020-2022). The program accepted 15 students whose families had demonstrated commitment to Sueños programs and a need for education.



## Curriculum

The preschool curriculum is focused on developing early literacy skills as well as social skills, self-esteem, and critical thinking. The classroom is organized in interest centers, giving children the autonomy to choose their activities throughout the day. As in the primary school program, children examine current issues in their communities through project based learning.

The projects explored in 2021 were: Module #1 "How does Covid-19 impact my life?"; Module #2 "Why are there child laborers in my community?"; Module #3 "What Mayan traditions would I like to have in my life?"; Module #4 "How do I see myself in the future?".

Though there are a number of public and private preschool options in our geographic region, there are no other preschools that provide education in K'iche.

# Primary School Program

## Primary Education

During the 2021 January-October school year, primary school education was conducted through a partnership with the homeschool program Instituto de Educacion a Distancia (ISEA), accredited by the Guatemalan Ministry of Education. This agreement with ISEA enables Sueños to hold educational classes using the Sueños community-centered methodology and the Guatemalan National Curriculum (CNB). Students who complete the primary school program receive a certificate at the end of the academic year, as they would at any other school in Guatemala. Sueños accepted 13 students between the ages of 7-12.



## Curriculum

The primary school curriculum is project based, and students are challenged to use research, interpretation and analysis to solve real world problems that affect their communities.

An integral element of the curriculum is an exploration of students' identity, beginning with learning about themselves and their families, moving to their interaction with their community, and later focusing on the country as a whole.

Students were evaluated at the end of each module (four times throughout the year) using two measurements: 1. a skills-based rubric measuring their progress across grade levels for literacy skills, social and emotional skills, and critical thinking skills developed by Sueños and influenced by the Guatemalan National Curriculum, and Northeastern Illinois University's critical thinking rubric; 2. grades for each academic which were created through a combination of skills-based assessments derived from the Guatemalan National Curriculum (CNB) and classroom participation.

# Supportive Services

## Student Services

Since November 2020, Sueños has been working with a psychologist to provide one-on-one therapy and group therapy sessions regarding emotional intelligence and sexual education. In 2021, the psychology program had three components, individual and group therapy for students, optional counseling for parents free of cost, and monthly workshops for parents.

In 2021, children received group workshops, with topics including sex education, puberty, menstruation, and emotional intelligence. Motives for inviting a child to individual therapy sessions were emotional dysregulation in the classroom as well as signs of, or self reporting of, sexual abuse. Students who received individual therapy were diagnosed with sexual abuse, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, negligence, and nonspecific conduct disorder.



## Parent Services

Parents are invited into the learning process through monthly workshops, parent-teacher conferences, counseling sessions, and monthly volunteering at the school where they help in the kitchen or classroom, allowing the school to reflect cultural values such as respect for family and create positive relationships between the school and family structures. Students and their families receive the support of a full-time social worker and psychologist to support student socio-emotional wellbeing and learning.

### **Therapy:**

Sueños was able to implement free counseling for parents as an option for further support. Introducing our psychologist at Sueños meant that it was the first time that the majority of families were exposed to a psychologist and invited to attend therapy.

### **Monthly Meetings:**

Parent meetings provide the communication between Sueños and the community necessary to plan effective programs. They also provide the opportunity for parents to have their own space of learning and growth. The group of “parents” at Sueños consists of two adults from each family who are committed to the child’s education, a new requirement for participation in Sueños programs.

The workshop themes were: the importance of play, how to create a safe space, emotional regulation, emotional intelligence, and discrimination and racism.



# 2021 Impact

13

# of preschool students served

13

# primary students served

2

# of adults who completed primary education

8

# of preschool students with over 70% attendance

12

# of primary students with over 70% attendance

100

% of primary students promoted to the next grade

94

overall grade average

28

# of students who received group counseling workshops

6

# of students who received individual therapy

11

# of parents who attended parent workshops

8

# of parents who received counseling services

2,036

# of meals provided