

Learning from Q'eqchi' School Teachers



Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth

What Materials can Assist them to Teach Q'eqchi' Children

Photography: Erick Flores
Design and Layout: Su Lin Chang

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Here are seven local teachers in the Seamay school on the edge of Senahu. Melanny is holding up her poster concept, putting the entire ABC on a single sheet, to hang on the walls.

In October we visited the Seamay school, on the outskirts of Senahu village, high in the mountains of Alta Verapaz. This visit was arranged by a friend in Senahu who wanted to have the school teachers explain to us what educational tools would help them in their teaching local Q'eqchi' Mayan kids. FLAAR offers innovative material, which we develop from our own initiative. So our material is different than what a commercial school book company produces.

The FLAAR material is developed together with Q'eqchi' Mayan speaking student interns who work in the FLAAR office in Guatemala City. The graphic design is accomplished by university students who work for FLAAR (about 15 graphic designers, industrial designers, illustrators, and animators are in-house, so we have a diverse team of talent).



Melanny is doing her university thesis on how to adapt teaching aids based on feedback from the teachers (and from the students).



Dr Nicholas is laying out the ABC cards. Our illustrators prepare these; we then take them to printer expos around the world, and the printer booth personnel at these trade shows print samples for us. We then fly these back to Guatemala.



Here the students are spelling bat (murcielago in Spanish).

Notice all the wall space with posters. We wish to prepare educational posters for these spaces for the schools.



Here the school children spell rock, piedra.

By having these cardboard letters, the children can interact with the alphabet. Cardboard holds up to daily use much better than paper.

So both the teachers and the students help our teams learn what materials we can provide to the schools to assist them. The teachers in every school we have visited have asked us specifically to always include English in multi-lingual (Spanish-Q'eqchi' Mayan) teaching aids. The teachers say that commercial book publishers either have nothing in Q'eqchi' Mayan, or nothing that is fully tri-lingual.

Once we have the materials updated, then it would help to have funds to print one set of everything for each Q'eqchi' Mayan school:

- Posters for the wall
- ABC and abc and Aa Bb Cc individual letters
- ABC books
 - o physical (traditional) books,
 - o and e-books,
 - o and also a format that is easy to read on the size of mobile phone that families have in the mountains of Alta Verapaz.
 - o Videos with music and lots of colors, as this is the way kids best learn to read ABC (we found this out with the 3 year old daughter of one of our Q'eqchi' employees; we taught her to read ABC before she was 3 years old!).

Then come learning the basic words. We wish to prepare everything all the way up to having the children being able to read. And, we have developed a set of material to teach their mothers and grandmothers to read. Women often did not get a chance to attend school when children.

It would be so helpful to reach the mothers and grandmothers (and fathers and grandfathers). Naturally it would be great to have these teaching aids in the other native languages of Guatemala, in other areas of the country. We have already begun with Kakchiquel and Pokomchi. Funding would allow us to add Achi and continue with the other languages.