



SHOW OR TELL?

Teachers enjoy a lively new training experience

Because good teaching is central to literacy development, Child Aid has always strived to provide teacher training workshops that give participants new skills, and energize and inspire them to become better teachers. We have found that teachers enjoy our workshops because engaging, interactive training is uncommon in Guatemala.

Teachers there are required to do a certain amount of training each year, but it is generally of very low quality. Trainings are conducted in a lecture format with 150 to 200 teachers in a session. Presenters talk from a podium while the teachers listen and take notes. The content is often heavy on theory and contains little practical application for the teachers, and there is no opportunity for dialogue, for modeling, or for practice.

These ineffective trainings are difficult for the teachers, and tend to leave them feeling cynical about professional development.

Teachers find the Ministry of Education trainings boring. It's not uncommon to see teachers on their cell phones or reading the paper while the presenter is talking. Some teachers report that they don't feel respected,

and so they don't give it their attention.

Child Aid workshops give participants a very different training experience, getting them out of their chairs and actively involved in the learning process. When you donate to Child Aid, you are making these workshops and follow-up sessions with the teachers possible.

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Teachers work in small groups on a writing assignment during a training workshop. Child Aid workshops feature opportunities for plenty of hands-on learning.

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“We know that teachers don’t want to be talked at,” says Country Director John van Keppel. “They want to be able to ask questions about how new techniques or strategies can be implemented. And we’ve found that teachers learn best when they have multiple opportunities to put theory into practice.”

Over the years, Child Aid has developed a variety of techniques and strategies to help make our six teacher training workshops effective. Here are some things we do:



Show, don’t tell

Our workshop activities are designed to model techniques in a classroom environment so that teachers can experience the material as a student first. Throughout the sessions, we have them work both in small groups and as a whole class to demonstrate different types of teacher-student interactions.

Engage in dialogue

We are not just talking heads telling teachers how to promote reading and writing. We engage them in conversation, allowing them to make discoveries about how best to use the materials in the context of their own classrooms.

Keep them moving

Too much time in a chair can be counterproductive. Our activities get the teachers up and moving around the classroom.



During a teacher training workshop, Literacy Trainer Jeremias Morales leads “I Am a Writer,” modeling techniques teachers can use in their classrooms.

Let them practice

Our trainers make sure the participants leave the workshop having thoroughly and successfully practiced the skills they were taught.

Learn together

While our trainers have much valuable information to share, the teachers we work with are the experts on their classrooms. Our trainers keep an open mind to learn from the teachers during the workshops.

Provide attractive, easy-to-use materials

During each training, teachers receive a portion of the Child Aid Manual with clear descriptions of techniques and materials for lesson planning. Teachers also receive new books, so they can immediately implement the techniques they have learned.

Provide lots of follow-up and support

Every teacher receives two personalized follow-up sessions in their classroom after each training. These visits enable them to practice new methods with support and encouragement from the trainers.

Teachers tell us that Child Aid workshops not only provide them with new skills, they also make them feel more respected and valued as professionals.

“Teachers know they are going to learn something when they go to a Child Aid workshop, because the sessions are so disciplined and organized,” says principal Ramirez. “So they give it their attention and try harder. And I think they transmit that attitude to their students.”

I AM A WRITER

To start modeling her writing lesson, Child Aid Literacy Trainer Marilena Ixen stands up in front of the class and says, “Good morning, children. Would you like to hear a story?” Their teacher observes and takes notes.

The kids, first graders from the Chiquel school, respond with an enthusiastic “Yes!” and look up expectantly to see what will happen next.

Ixen begins to tell the students a story, a legend about a local festival, asking them questions along the way. Next, she does something unexpected. She tells the students that together, they are going to rewrite the story. She brings out a big piece of paper and talks with them about the main idea of the story, the characters, and the key elements of the plot.

Then she begins to write while students call out ideas and suggestions for each sentence.

The activity, called *Escucho y Escribo*, or “I Listen, I Write,” is a guided writing exercise in which students recreate a story they know using their own words. It is one of four teaching techniques that Child Aid uses to model the writing process.

“In the final year of our teacher training workshops, we begin to make a transition,” says Literacy Trainer Norma Guzman. “Previously we worked on developing the characteristics of good readers. Now we work on the transition from good readers to good writers.”

The four techniques are designed to help the teachers work through the full writing process with their students – from planning and pre-writing, to writing, revising, editing, and publishing (which here means sharing their writing, either with the class or with the whole school). “I Listen, I Write” and “Writer’s Circle” show students how to identify a “writing seed” and to organize their ideas before beginning to write. “I Am a Writer” and “Write a Newspaper” help students structure their ideas further by identifying a purpose and an audience.

“We put a lot of emphasis on prewriting and planning because for anyone who is a beginning writer, these are important but difficult concepts,” says Director of Curriculum and Instruction Erin Conway. “They are concepts that Guatemalan teachers do not address in their classrooms, mainly because they have not had that instruction themselves.” By giving to Child Aid, you help us to close these gaps in the education of teachers, and to buttress their support systems.



Literacy Trainer Rosenda Ajpacaja leads a guided writing activity.

The Child Aid techniques are designed to allay teachers’ anxieties about writing by providing ample practice in guided activities and small groups before students are ever asked to put pen to paper on their own. These methodologies are introduced in the training workshops, where the teachers are the students and participate in the activities themselves.

“It’s very important for us in the workshops to model the types of interactions that we want the teachers to have with their students,” says Conway. “Because it is not the same to give the students an assignment as it is to work through the process with them: ask clarifying questions, ask for more details, and model that thinking process for them. The children don’t have that inner monologue, and if it is not modeled for them, they won’t ever have it.”

The writing activities give students new opportunities to express themselves and their creativity, something that they are rarely encouraged to do. “The majority of the time the students think that to write a book or a story is something difficult, and they think they can’t do it,” says Marilena Ixen. “But then they have fun, and I like to see the pride that they have at the end of the activity, when they realize they can write all by themselves.”



Teacher training is vital for schools with limited resources, such as the Chujomil school, above. Below: An impromptu reading session on the Chujomil playground.

CHRISTMAS IN JULY!

Books distributed to communities throughout Guatemala

An assortment of cars, pickup trucks and minivans snaked through the fields of a coffee farm near Antigua in early July, on their way to pick up boxes full of brand new books.

Representatives from 19 schools, libraries and community organizations traveled from far and wide to Child Aid's book warehouse for our Book Distribution Day, a yearly event that helps get books into the hands of kids in rural communities.

Last year, Child Aid distributed over 100,000 Spanish language books donated by book distributors International Book Bank and the International Book Project. With the help of these wonderful organizations, this year we are on track to repeat that level of success. With the help of contributors like you, we continue to expand the reach of our programs to more teachers, children, and communities.

Throughout the year, Child Aid delivers many of these books to our partner schools and libraries. The rest are distributed through book distribution events such as this one, which are open to any community or organization that wants to participate.



Child Aid distributed 28,000 books in a matter of hours.



A training session for participants.

for the town's municipal library would nearly double the size of their collection. "These books will be a great addition to our community," he said.

As the last truck pulled away, members of the Child Aid staff congratulated each other in the nearly empty warehouse after distributing over 28,000 books in just a few hours. But they won't be able to relax for long. A shipping container full of nearly 25,000 books arrived this week.

This year groups came from as far away as La Libertad, in the northern state of Peten, and Rio Blanco, near the western city of Quetzaltenango.

The event kicks off with a four-hour training session, which helps familiarize participants with the books they are receiving, and provides instruction on the cataloging and display of books to make them more accessible to patrons.

In a country where books of any kind are hard to come by, an event like this is a joyous occasion. The smiles were big and the enthusiasm contagious as groups pulled up to the warehouse and loaded boxes of books into their vehicles.

Mario Hernandez Orellana, from the small town of Parramos, was beaming when he described how the donation of over 1,500 new books

NEW BOOKS COURTESY OF:



Budding bookworms.



A selection of books purchased through the MoneyGram Foundation grant.



Members of the Child Aid staff develop strategies for integrating the books into classroom instruction.



Student teachers review the new selection of books.



Students at the Agua Escondida school library enjoy reading the new books.

Make a donation to Child Aid today

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