



ESCUELA VERA ANGELITA



- 03** Mission
- 05** Who We Serve
- 06** Our Impact
- 07** 2022 School Year
- 09** Creating a Sisterhood
- 10** Community Empowerment
- 11** Vera Eco-Resort
- 13** Vera Angelita Estate
- 15** Conservation
- 16** Staff Support
- 17** Preserving Culture
- 18** 6th Grade Graduation
- 19** Boarding
- 20** Lifelong Habits & Lessons
- 21** Extracurricular Activities
- 22** A Love for Reading
- 23** Parent Involvement
- 24** Field Trips
- 25** Health at EVA
- 26** Student Wellbeing
- 27** Outside Connections
- 28** Testimonials





MISSION

Our mission is to prepare young Nicaraguan women in leading independent, healthy, goal-driven, and meaningful lives and to develop their academic, personal and professional leadership abilities for active participation in the modern world.



SCHOLARSHIP INCLUDES:



UNIFORMS



ALL SCHOOL SUPPLIES



MEALS & SNACKS



ROOM & BOARD



MEDICAL CARE



COUNSELING

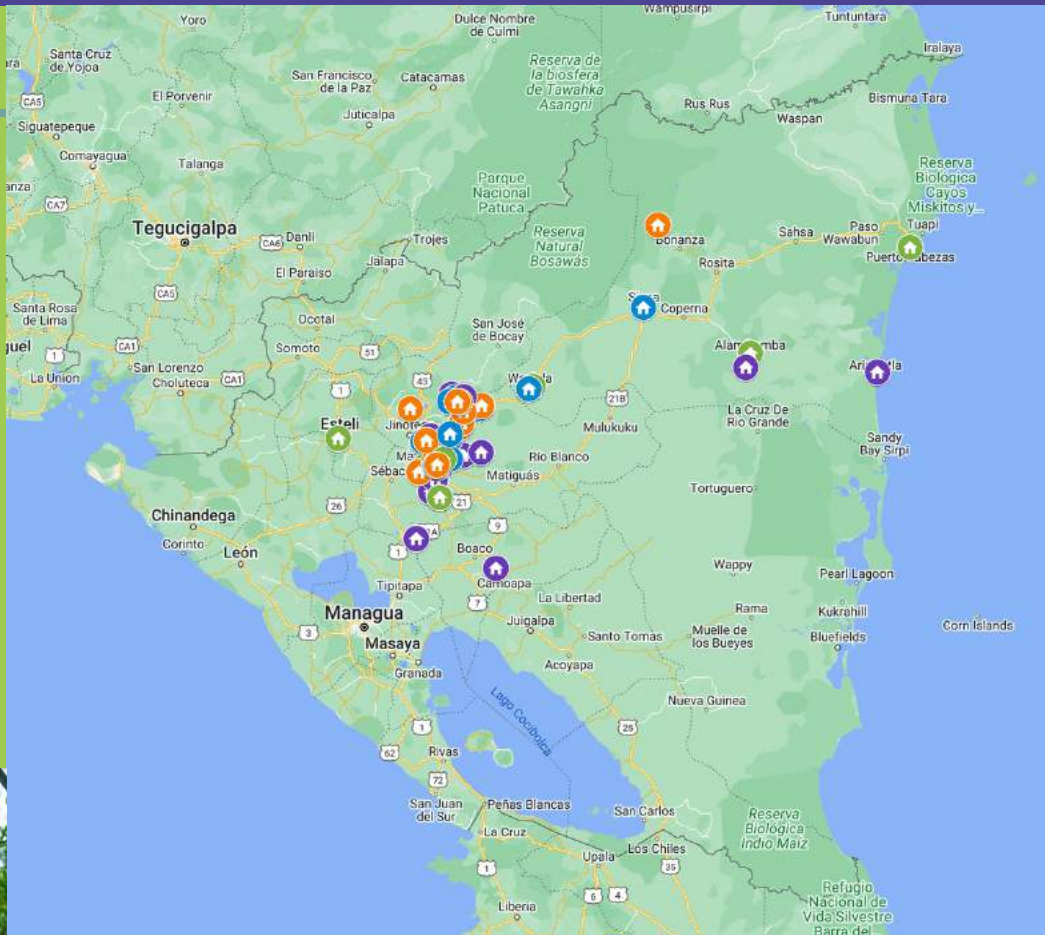
Vera Angelita is more than a boarding school. While working to nurture students' passions and develop the skills needed to understand and address important local and global issues, our students receive an education with full room & board at no cost to them or their families.

WHO WE SERVE



WHERE OUR STUDENTS ARE LOCATED

- 66%** RURAL COMMUNITIES OF MATAGALPA
- 14%** CARIBBEAN COAST
- 19%** RURAL COMMUNITIES OF JINOTEGA
- 1%** BOACO



STUDENTS' FAMILY INCOME

- 24%** LIVE ON AROUND \$10 A DAY
- 70%** LIVE ON AROUND \$5 A DAY
- 6%** LIVE ON AROUND \$1 A DAY



STUDENTS' NATIVE LANGUAGE

- 92%** SPANISH
- 7%** MISKITU
- 1%** MAYAGNA



STUDENTS' HOME LIVING CONDITIONS

- 94%** DON'T HAVE PROPER SANITATION FACILITIES
- 79%** HAVE A DIRT FLOOR
- 36%** DON'T HAVE CLEAN WATER
- 73%** USE A WOOD STOVE



OUR IMPACT





2022 SCHOOL YEAR

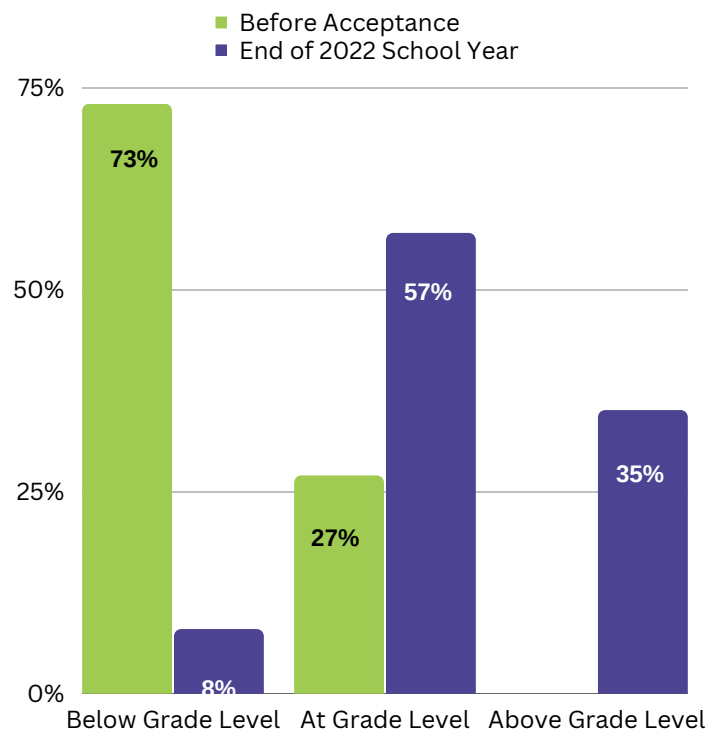
Our bilingual (Spanish / English) curriculum is focused on experiential learning with the intent of developing critical thinking abilities, while also nurturing student passions and developing the skills needed to understand and address important local and global issues.

Our students have successfully demonstrated a passion and a capacity for learning, inherent leadership qualities, and a desire to make a positive impact on our world.

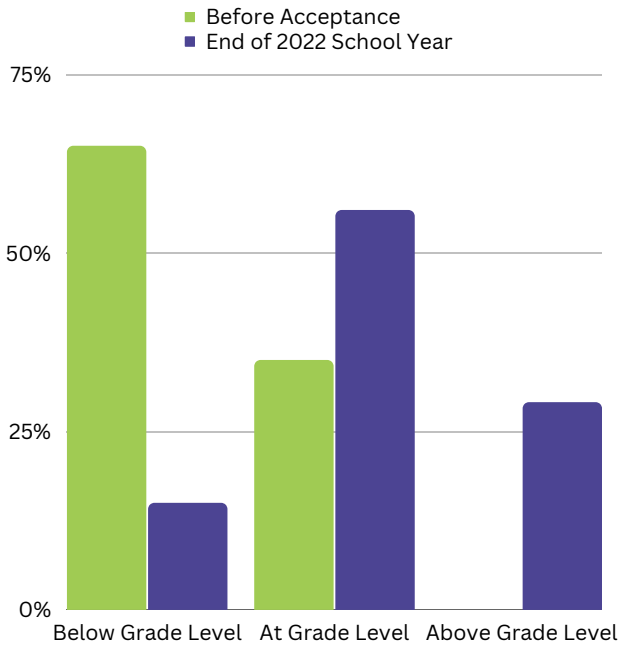
92%

Are At Grade Level or Above Grade Level

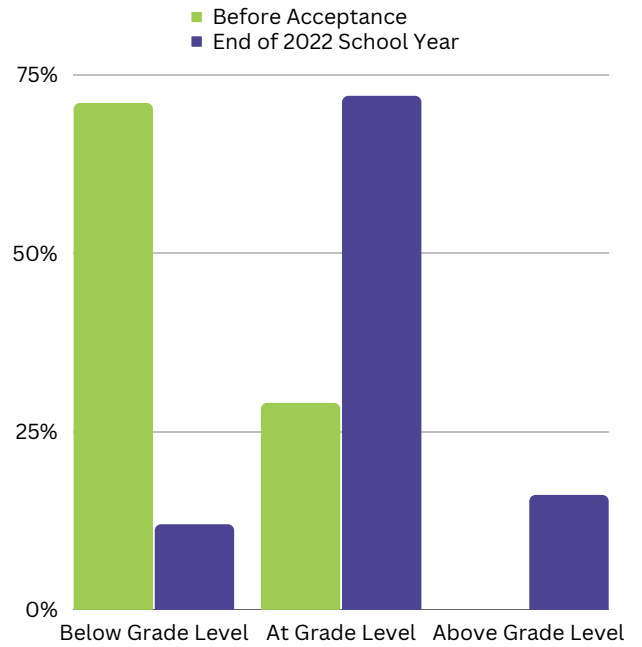
ALL STUDENTS:



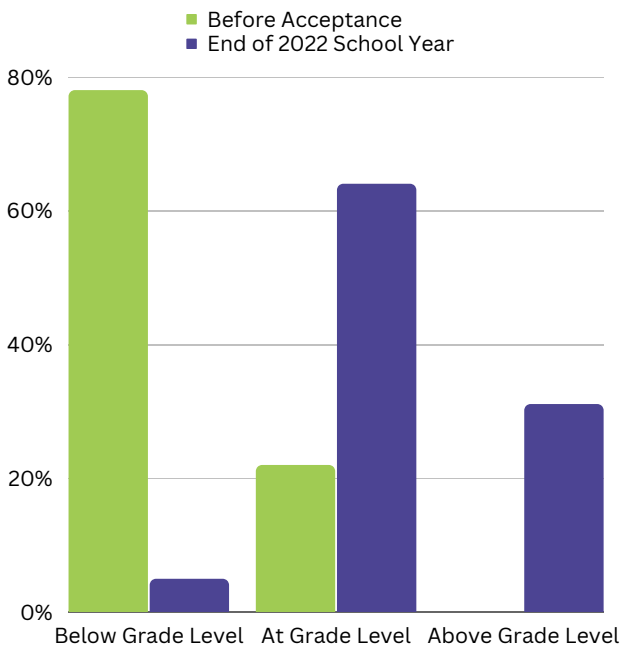
5TH GRADE:



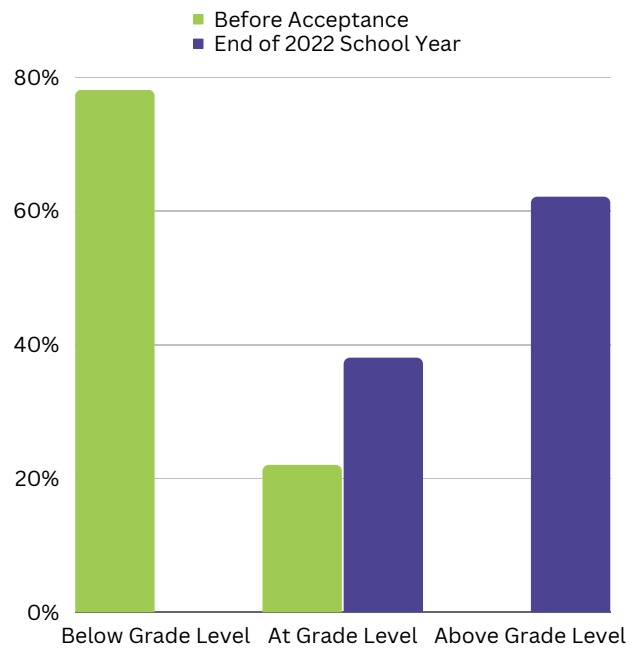
6TH GRADE:



7TH GRADE:



8TH GRADE:



68 STUDENTS TOTAL
 SERVED OUR FIRST YEAR FROM 5TH GRADE TO
 8TH GRADE

CREATING A SISTERHOOD

EVA is not only preparing girls with the academic, social, and emotional skills they need to thrive as global citizens, it is also enabling a special bond amongst them that is stronger than any “network”. The sisterhood that EVA fosters is something which they will forever hold on to, well beyond their time here. A sisterhood of love, learning, and support which can only be felt by those who experience it firsthand.

- Niki Hrusa Castillo, Visions Global Empowerment, USA, Education Program Officer





COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

The establishment of Escuela Vera Angelita, along with the Vera Eco-Resort and Vera Angelita farm, has had a significant impact on the local community by providing employment opportunities to well over 850 people in Nicaragua over the past several years. At the end of 2022, the project employed 177 individuals full-time, providing them with secure and stable jobs across diverse sectors, almost all of whom are from local or neighboring communities. This has had a transformative effect on their lives, enabling them to support themselves and their families, and contributing to the overall economic growth of the region.

850+

jobs created since
project inception



VERA ECO-RESORT

An integral part of our project, the Vera Eco-Resort enables guests to relax and reset through an immersive experience of natural connection, personal rejuvenation and community connection & service.

Sharing an inextricable link with the school, the Vera Eco-Resort offers the opportunity to both experience Nicaragua while also exploring cultural and community connection and purpose in a rural setting. Guests are welcome to join



our students during after-school hours and on weekends in extracurricular activities or in conducting activities or lessons of their own. There are also many opportunities to engage with neighboring communities in supporting volunteer efforts focused on education, agriculture, health, water, conservation, research, and much more. We will customize an itinerary for you depending on your interests!

We specialize in group and donor retreats, customizing experiences that provide an opportunity for guests to learn, to explore, to focus on personal health & wellbeing, and to engage in meaningful service work with local communities. All profits from the Vera Eco-Resort benefit the school and local

community development initiatives.

We offer 27 bedrooms across 6 villas, each with its own identity and design, and a capacity to accommodate a maximum of 60 guests for groups and events. Guests have access to our onsite gym and multi-use sports court, as well as a yoga & massage platform and onsite dining facility.

We are an all-inclusive resort, meaning your stay includes accommodation, all meals, bottled water, local transportation, a guide, and all onsite activities. We have a dedicated team ready to serve and ensure you have an amazing experience. As our guest, you can enjoy:

- Healthy, vegetarian & vegan farm-to-table cuisine
- Daily yoga & meditation
- Horseback riding
- Service Opportunities
- Spanish Lessons
- Cooking Classes
- Guided hikes & farm tours
- Birdwatching
- Onsite trails and gardens
- Afternoon coffee / tea
- Evening bonfire
- Gym & sports court access
- Massage (*additional charge)
- Room Service (*additional charge)
- High speed wifi
- 24-hour security
- Onsite physician
- Purified drinking water
- Laundry service
- English-speaking tour guides
- Airport Transportation



Please visit
www.VeraEcoResort.com
 for more information. We
 are now open year-round
 for bookings!



VERA ANGELITA ESTATE

The Vera Angelita Estate spans 437 acres and is home to both Vera Eco-Resort and Escuela Vera Angelita. While these two developments take up a small portion of the overall land, the majority of the estate is home to a full-fledged farm, botanical gardens, agroforestry area, hiking trails, coffee plantation, and large private nature reserve.



Our estate team is actually comprised of many smaller teams, each with its particular focus and each playing a crucial role in keeping the entire project functioning well. These teams include livestock, food production, landscaping, forestry, carpentry, security, transportation, housekeeping, maintenance, finance, and food services. Without the vital services these teams provide, our work would simply not be possible.

SUSTAINABILITY

With the aim of sustainability in mind, the objective has always been to create a self-sustaining operation, in which people are empowered and the need for outside support is redundant. In the process of establishing this project, we have witnessed a new culture take root in which this dream is becoming reality! Here are a few highlights:

In addition to our own domestic animals, 21 wild animals and 18 community animals treated to-date by our onsite veterinary team

FOOD PRODUCTION – currently 85% self-sufficient

We have fully organic food production systems based on a vegetarian/vegan diet and agriculture systems mimic nature.

ENERGY – goal is to be 100% self-sufficient

Solar panels & batteries have been installed throughout property, enabling us to achieve 60% energy sustainability to-date and efforts being taken to get us to our eventual goal of 100%

WATER – currently 100% self-sufficient

We established robust natural water collection and purification systems and have gone to great lengths to reforest the property and restore the watershed through planting of bamboo and endemic trees.

WASTE – goal is to be 90% self-sufficient (organic & recycling)

All grey & black water and solid waste is processed onsite. Animal waste is reused for fertilizers. We have a robust recycling / reuse program, and our general operating policies throughout the project prioritize sustainable, renewable, and reusable materials and practices.



64

native bee colonies established



240

goats, sheep, horses, donkeys, dogs, chickens, ducks, cats, and water buffalo living onsite



9,000 lbs.

of organic food from our farm donated to a local maternity hospital



CONSERVATION

In the midst of a climate crisis, we endeavor to not only lessen our ecological footprint, but also to make a positive and lasting impact on our natural environment. Over the course of the last few years, we have undertaken major efforts to reforest much of our property, restore the watershed, protect & rehabilitate local wildlife, and promote sustainable living.

35,201
trees planted

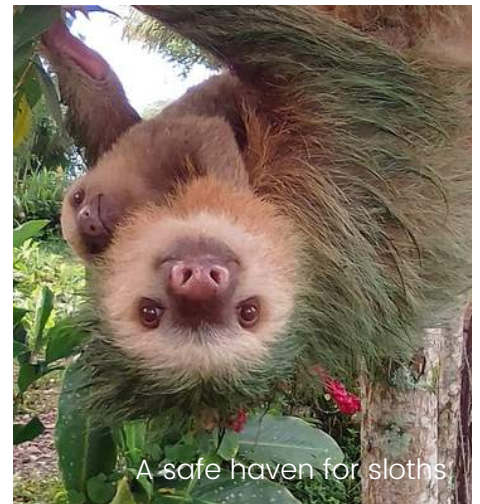
139.2
acres under wildlife protection

60.4
acres reforested

4,647
bamboo planted for water retention

66,500
pounds of organic waste material recycled & used for soil

248
species of bird, mammal, reptile, amphibian, & insect observed and identified



A safe haven for sloths



Rescued, orphaned wild deer

STAFF SUPPORT



Investing in our invaluable workforce is not only beneficial to the project, but more importantly, to the workers themselves and to the overall development of the neighboring communities from which they hail. Dozens of staff development trainings have been conducted, ranging from hydroponic food systems management to apiculture (bee keeping) to snake handling to blacksmithing & equine podiatry to vegetarian cuisine preparation.

In an effort to create a positive and supportive work environment, we have also layered in other (free) support services, including daily transportation to/from work, daily onsite lunch, English courses for anyone who wishes to learn, access to a farmers' market in which we sell our organic produce for a fraction of the cost in town, housing onsite and at a neighboring property we own for key staff, medical care by our onsite physician for those who need it, and more. We even have a special kitchen & dining hall, as well as staff bathrooms, showers and lockers onsite for our estate workers. The backbone of our project, the hundreds of people who comprise our workforce are developing skills in diverse fields, reaching far beyond the traditional coffee picking and day laboring work that defines this part of the country.

60
staff who attend(ed)
free English courses

55
staff who utilize
free transportation
services daily

18
months our own Farmers'
Market has been operating





DISCOVERING AND PRESERVING CULTURE

Although Nicaragua is often considered a homogenous country by international and national standards, it is actually home to various indigenous groups who have struggled to preserve their culture in the face of a rapidly globalizing world that revolves around the English and Spanish languages. As a result, many of these groups have been overlooked due to communication barriers and their remote locations, leading many members to leave their communities in search of other opportunities. Unfortunately, many of those who leave do not return, losing contact with their culture and language.



At EVA, we are proud to be a home for girls from the Miskito and Mayagna groups of Nicaragua. Their diversity brings unique perspectives and experiences, which enriches the learning environment for all students and staff. We work closely with the students' parents and community leaders to provide an education that celebrates and values the heritage of all students. This includes preserving and promoting the language, culture, and traditions of the indigenous groups represented at EVA.

One of our Mayagna students, Leyla, is a shining example of this. She is already committed to writing a book that shares the stories and traditions of her people and community, and has already become a leader amongst her community and peers. We are excited to see the positive impact this will have in preserving the rich heritage of these groups for future generations.

6TH GRADE GRADUATION



A REASON TO CELEBRATE

Similar to an American middle school graduation, 6th Grade marks the last year of primary school in Nicaragua. EVA hosted its first 6th grade commencement ceremony last December 2022. For many girls and their family members, it marked the first real celebration they had attended. Graduating 6th grade is many of these girls' first goal they wish to accomplish in life. And for some, a goal they were unsure they would attain. Although "official" data states that over 90% of Nicaraguan children graduate primary school, the reality is likely much less. It is also particularly girls that are the first to be pulled out of school for other reasons and give up their education. Girls are usually chosen to stay behind to run their household, provide childcare, engage in labor, or simply not add to the family expenses.

Our commencement ceremony was not only a celebration of the hard work and dedication of our students, but also a recognition of the sacrifices and support of their parents, who attended the ceremony and enjoyed a delicious three-course seated meal at EVA.

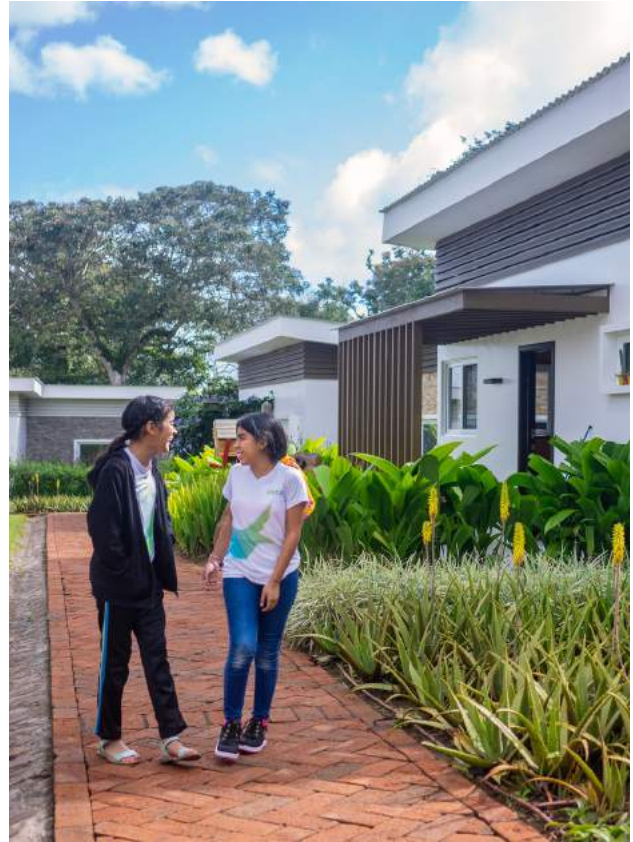
This graduation ceremony was a memorable and joyful occasion that celebrated the achievements of our students and the dedication of their families. We are confident that our graduates will continue to strive for greatness and make a positive impact in their community.

BOARDING

Accessibility, Safety, Opportunity

As one of the few boarding institutions in Nicaragua, the concept of boarding for young girls and women was initially met with some hesitancy. However, once parents and students saw our state-of-the-art facilities and understood our program, they quickly understood the benefits it provided. Prior to attending EVA, many of our students faced a daily struggle of walking long distances, often in difficult and dangerous conditions in order to attend school.

In Nicaragua, as students progress to higher levels of education, schools become increasingly scarce. This can often mean that students have to walk even farther or pay for transportation to attend high school. The reality for most rural students though is that paying for transport and the extra mile of unknown path are simply not an option. This leads the highest level of abandonment at this grade.



Although it may seem like a luxury to some, or something common to others, at EVA, each student has their own bed, something that many of them had never experienced before. This not only improves the physical comfort of our students, but also contributes to their sense of safety and well-being.

While being away from their families can be difficult, our students understand that the opportunity to receive a top-notch education is worth the sacrifice. At EVA, we are committed to providing our students with the support and resources they need to succeed, both academically and personally.

95%

of our 5th, 6th, and 7th grade parents say their daughter would not have continued going to school daily if they had not gone to Vera Angelita



SPOTLIGHT: Junieth

Junieth, one of our students from the northern Atlantic coast, shocked her mother when she refused to eat turtle eggs when going home for a week. Puzzled at first, Junieth explained to her mother the reasoning behind her choice and how turtles in the region are endangered due to this practice. Her mother was both surprised to hear about this and proud to learn something from her daughter.

LIFELONG HABITS- LIFELONG LESSONS

As an institution that adheres to the UNESCO model of Education for Sustainable Development, our curriculum is designed to empower students to understand and take action towards preserving and protecting their communities and the planet. The transition to a vegetarian lifestyle may have been challenging for some students at first, but they have come to understand and embrace it and have started making more mindful choices in their food consumption.

One of the most remarkable impacts we have seen is the students' increased enthusiasm for environmental protection. They have taken the lead in organizing community clean-up efforts during breaks and developing innovative and sustainable solutions for managing waste in their homes.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES



At Escuela Vera Angelita, we offer a diverse array of extracurricular activities, covering a variety of areas allowing students to discover new topics which they have learned to love and develop a passion for. Some of these activities include sports like soccer, athletics, volleyball, and hiking but can also range into choir, ballet, and even piano lessons. Our learning facilitators and caretakers, who lead extracurricular clubs, try to incorporate physical health and values such as discipline, teamwork, and respect into each session.



Students practice patience, creativity, brain health, and mindfulness in activities such as embroidery, knitting, arts, and crafts. Members of our literacy club have also gotten the chance to develop valuable skills that support their learning process. One of the outcomes of this club was publishing EVA's first book! Students wrote about their life experiences as well as fantasy tales that reflected each students' creativity, sincerity, and talent.

Extracurricular activities also help students develop important skills that teach them courage, confidence, and self-esteem-qualities they will use and need for the rest of their lives. By learning how to swim, taking dancing sessions, and even gaining a few musical skills, they are enriching their own personal profiles. This can also lead them to more opportunities for college admissions, scholarships and to gain a different point of view about sports and arts.



English is also a core element in our extracurricular activities and is practiced in each session. This way, we can assure EVA students are getting constant exposure to bilingual environments, giving them an immense benefit for future studies, travels, work, and connections to the English-speaking world. Our students are obtaining all these skills, tools, and knowledge, all while they are having fun, learning by doing, sharing time with each other and creating core memories.

◀ LEFT

Intra-school football tournament

A LOVE FOR READING

Although having foundational literacy skills is a requirement for acceptance to EVA, we found that some of our students were reading well below grade level and had not yet developed full literacy skills. Improving literacy in their native language has been a priority for EVA teachers, which is critical to do before formally introducing a second language, such as English, in written form. For most EVA students, their previous experiences with "reading" consisted mainly of repeating what was written on the whiteboard in their prior schools and working with limited materials.

EVA's library has proven to be the largest collection of books many of our students have ever encountered. And for most, it was their first experience entering a library. By providing access to appropriate stories, novels, and comics, we have fostered a love of reading that has spread throughout the student body.



Midway through the school year, our head of school established a goal for the school to read a total of 500 books by the end of the year. Not only did the students embrace this challenge without hesitation, but they exceeded it by reading a total of 550 books! It is clear that our students' passion for reading has grown exponentially and we are thrilled to continue to provide them with an ever-expanding selection of books to feed their love of literature.

FIELD TRIPS

At EVA, we believe that the great outdoors is the best classroom of all. Weather permitting, we take advantage of the beautiful natural surroundings to provide hands-on, experimental learning opportunities for our students. Whether it be learning about animals with our veterinarian, or about photosynthesis in our greenhouses, our educational model prioritizes experiential learning above all.

Throughout the 2022 school year, EVA students had the opportunity to go on two exciting field trips outside of Matagalpa. Nicaragua is blessed with a wide variety of natural landscapes, and these trips provided our students with unforgettable learning experiences.

One of our field trips took us to Masaya Volcano, one of only three volcanoes in the world to boast lakes of incandescent magma. This was an incredible geography lesson and many of our Matagalpa/Jinotega students had the opportunity to experience a drastic change in temperature for the first time.

Our second field trip was to Leon, a colonial city that holds a significant place in Nicaragua's history. Our students were able to see firsthand the buildings, scripts, and land that they have read about in their history books. After touring the city, we took a quick 20-minute drive to the Pacific coast, where our students were in awe at their first sight of the ocean. For many, this was the first time they had ever seen the ocean, making it a truly unforgettable experience.

One of our younger students was curious about the ocean water and was determined to find out for herself if it was salty or not. She tasted a bit of ocean water and was pleasantly surprised to confirm that it was salty, making it a fun and interactive learning experience for her. Overall, EVA's field trips provide students with unique and memorable learning experiences that they will treasure forever.





PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The support and involvement of families is a vital component of the EVA school model. We believe that, while our students spend the majority of their time on campus under the guidance of their caregivers and teachers, it is important for parents to be actively involved in their daughters' education. To this end, we encourage regular parent visits and biweekly phone calls to ensure that families stay connected. We provide a phone to every family and cover the cost of their monthly phone bill to ensure regular connection with their daughters.

100% of parents have reported positive changes in their daughters since they began attending EVA.

These changes include increased self-confidence and pride in their accomplishments. Our students are also eager to share their knowledge and skills with their siblings and other community members when they return home.

While we do not expect families to make financial contributions towards their daughters' education, many have chosen to donate crops from their lands. These donations, such as oranges, bananas, and beans, are greatly appreciated by the entire student body. We are always delighted to see these gifts at our doorstep!



HEALTH AT EVA

Having an onsite doctor, our students start their medical dossier the moment they first arrive to EVA. For many girls, this is the first proper medical documentation they've had in their lives, some not even sure about which vaccines or medications they have received in the past.



MAJOR MEDICAL ISSUES IDENTIFIED:

In the course of receiving regular medical attention, a number of medical and health issues were identified in some of our students including:

- 4 cases of special pediatric care needed
- 2 cases of appendicitis
- 1 case of epilepsy
- 2 cases of heart defects
- 4 cases of severe ear and nose problems

We coordinated screenings and tests to further understand these conditions and arranged care with specialists in Matagalpa city or even the capital city of Managua. For most parents, the transportation to the hospital is enough of an expense to avoid going all together. These costs as well as medication and follow up appointments were all covered by EVA.

Furthermore, all students received an annual eye exam. From those exams, 13 students were

identified as needing eyeglasses and were given their own pair based on their prescription.

Additionally, all students receive regular dental cleaning and screenings. Some students have needed further dental procedures, including:

- 23 tooth extractions
- 95 restorative dentistry
- 14 teeth x-rays
- 5 root canal treatments

100%

of students received dental and eye care services for the first time in their lives

68%

of students have no memory of ever visiting a doctor before coming to EVA

Finally, access to menstrual health supplies are provided regularly to all students, along with sexual reproductive health counseling. Students attend health classes regarding personal care, hygiene, and healthy diets, which help ensure preventable health issues are avoided.

STUDENT WELL-BEING

Our counselor trains students twice a month to help them to get to know themselves better and develop some skills to become empowered young women. With these skills, they are able to face their challenges with courage and learn tools that will help them for the rest of their lives.

- 100% of our students didn't have access to a counselor in their previous schools, now they have one available 24/7
- Our counselor trains caretakers and teachers on a monthly basis on different relevant topics which equip them with resources and knowledge to better support the students during their challenges.
- 100% of Caretakers are trained in workshops related to child protection and emotional first aid.

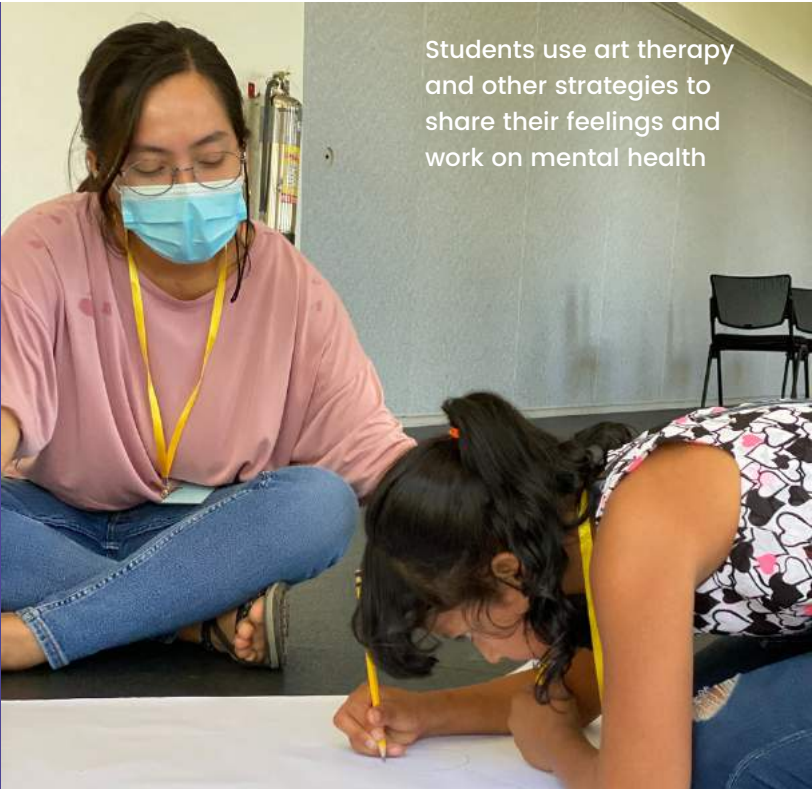


24.4% of pregnancies are adolescents; that is, 92 out of every 1,000 adolescent women (between 15 and 18 years old) are mothers. Adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age are twice as likely to die from complications during pregnancy as women between 20 and 24 years of age. Abortion is illegal in Nicaragua.¹

At EVA, 100% of the students participate in workshops related to sexual education and prevention of child sexual abuse.

"Being able to guide and support students to better integrate into their educational community has been a great opportunity to get to know them better. These students are exceptional and with the support of this entire Vera Angelita community, they will achieve great things."

- Kelin, School Counselor



Students use art therapy and other strategies to share their feelings and work on mental health

¹SIIDCA Central American Repository (2018)

OUTSIDE CONNECTIONS

Throughout the academic year, our students have had the opportunity to connect and interact with "friends of EVA" from various parts of the world. With the goal of fostering global perspectives and international friendships, EVA has organized various Zoom and in-person meetings titled "Words of Encouragement" with authors, business professionals, lawyers, and individuals from various fields. These sessions have provided our students with the chance to learn about different life opportunities and cultures, and to ask questions of their own.

Additionally, EVA has established connections with schools in the United States. Our 8th grade class has begun engaging in biweekly language exchanges via Zoom with other students. This has proven to be a highly enjoyable experience for our students, who particularly enjoy teaching and learning about the specific holidays and traditions celebrated in both countries.



FROM OUR STUDENTS:



“Thank you for teaching me how to enjoy life, how to love and care for myself, for giving me a quality education most girls do not get the privilege to receive.

Thank you for giving us English classes which will surely open many doors for us, for igniting that drive to excel in what we do. You have taught us so much in so many academic fields, overall skills, abilities, aptitudes, and attitudes. Thank you for being a home, for creating our sisterhood and the overall EVA community and family.”

“Thank you very much for the opportunity to receive a quality education and letting me acquire new knowledge such as table etiquette and protocols, learning about the Sustainable Development Goals, being able to publish a book with my fellow classmates and helping me become a leader in my community.”

And lastly, thank you for always being there when I need it.



“I am grateful for all the support I receive at Escuela Vera Angelita (EVA), grateful for being able to have this opportunity which I value very much. I know that many girls in the world would like to have this great chance.

Escuela Vera Angelita totally changed my life and thanks to EVA, I know that my dreams will come true!”



FROM OUR STAFF:



"They are now more confident and independent; they express themselves better and have demonstrated that they can achieve anything they set their minds to. These girls have countless abilities and talents – most of which they discovered here at EVA."

- Martha, Caregiver

"When they arrived at EVA, our girls were shy and scared. Now, they are leaders, they are not afraid to speak in public, they have grown positive thoughts and dreams they wish to achieve. They are girls who are very grateful for the support that EVA has given them."

- Sandra, Caregiver

The work that is done with the girls and knowing that they are receiving a quality education in a safe environment fills me with love and passion for the work we do in the organization. I know we are making a large scale positive impact in the lives of the students.

- Josseling, Learning Facilitator

"Students are more confident; they are taking on new subjects and are developing in an empowering environment."

- Cenelia, Teacher

We thank you for
your ongoing
support of our
efforts on behalf of
these amazing and
truly deserving
young women in
Nicaragua!



ESCUELA VERA ANGELITA

Comunidad La Grecia
Kilometro 143 y medio,
Carretera a Tuma la Dalia
San Ramón, Matagalpa
Nicaragua

www.veraschool.org

info@visionseducation.org