

FIFCO, Universidad Latina and CEN-CINAI teach English to more than 300 children in Guanacaste

The program began in 2021 in two CEN-CINAI and has expanded its operation to eight centers in the canton of Santa Cruz.

A program of Florida Ice and Farm Company (FIFCO), the National Directorate of CEN-CINAI and Universidad Latina, based in Santa Cruz, seeks to promote English learning in more than 300 children in these care centers in the province of Guanacaste.

The program began a year ago, promoted by Reserva Conchal, FIFCO's tourism project in the area, and started as a pilot plan for bilingualism in children in the canton of Santa Cruz, which began with 23 children and 2 training centers.

Thus, and during 2022, the initiative was implemented in 8 children's centers to impact a population of more than 300 boys and girls from CEN 27 de abril, Villareal, Santa Rosa, Matapalo El Llano, Edén Cartagena and CINAI Santa Cruz.

According to the head of community relations at Reserva Conchal, Adriana Porras Quirós, in an interview granted to Delfino.cr:

This is a public-private alliance that we established a year ago, which seeks to promote English learning in young children in state childcare centers that had not incorporated second language learning until now. We saw this area of opportunity, we shared it with some of our stakeholders and, fortunately, both the National Directorate of CEN-CINAI and Universidad Latina, based in Santa Cruz, got involved with us and we have been working together for over a year. This is what we are looking for: for the learning to be very, very natural for children, in their daily life at CEN, and for this to allow them to lose their fear of learning a second language, especially in communities like these, where this learning is very valuable for the future of boys and girls".

According to Porras, the project is related to the National Bilingualism Strategy because, although it establishes English language training starting at school, "from then on it was not mandatory, so there is a group of children who may be from vulnerable areas, like the ones we are in, who did not have that knowledge or could not generate from an early age that learning that will help them in their performance when they enter regular education".

The project works because the National Directorate of CEN-CINAI allows advanced students of English language careers of Universidad Latina to attend the centers and use their facilities to educate children.

These classes are given as part of the community service and professional practices of the students, who receive economic support from FIFCO for the payment of travel expenses.

In turn, the program provides tutoring to teachers "for learning to be parallel for both children and teachers at CENCINAI" according to Porras Quirós.

From a social and human point of view, it is very interesting because, for many of these students, the communities they serve are also communities close to them. They are contributing their learning and what they have been able to obtain during their career to their own communities and that generates an even more positive value. The idea is that the more time we have, the more we develop the process and we can incorporate more elements to the alliance so that the program grows more sustainable in time".

FIFCO has also worked on projects such as the construction of the Brasilito school, whose new headquarters were built by Reserva Conchal.

According to Porras:

It is a project that we started last year, and it was a priority need that existed in the community because since the Nicoya earthquake in 2012, the children did not have a school where they could receive their lessons. For more than 11 years, almost two complete generations of students did not attend the facilities of an educational center, since they received classes in a classroom that existed in the community. So last year we were able to join forces and work with the community to start building a school, which has already begun operations this school year.

They are currently working on a second phase to build the kindergarten and the mother-child area, which is expected to be completed in 2023.