

“How Happy People Can Be With Nothing!”

Bursary Fund student Isabelle Yeung's report of her year so far in Honduras

Wow. It's been a while! Everything's been pretty hectic around here lately but I know that's no excuse as most people are pretty busy. We're just getting ready for the first set of exams this year, and everything's back in full swing. We're changing from the Honduran school system (Feb-Nov) to the American bilingual school system so that we can participate in bilingual events, so we have five months of extra time in the current grades. It's a great chance to just get everything caught up and ready for next year, and we're also spending the extra time running arts clubs after school - raffia, crochet, drama, drawing, art, guitar, piano, traditional dance, recycled arts, football, board games and more! I'm running theatre, drawing and creative writing clubs. It's amazing seeing the kids grow in creativity and confidence in their own ideas.

I always think creativity is hugely underestimated, particularly here in Honduras. If you can think differently to others, you are particularly valuable as a part of society, right? We need to nurture differences and unique skills in order to work well together.

Clones and a lack of independent thought isn't innovation or change. I'm already noticing the difference in classes, particularly with 5th grade. Students are coming up with their own ideas and aren't afraid to be a little out-of-the-box with their work and projects. They no longer copy each other or the books! I'm still teaching Maths and Science to 3rd, 4th and 5th grade (aged about 9-12).

Yesterday was the school's 6th anniversary. It was a great day for everyone! All the kids drew around their hands and wrote a prayer of thanks on them, a line on each finger and we stuck them into a big technicolour tree behind the stage. We had a civica assembly with everyone, and each grade had students speaking about why the grade is awesome and special and different. Then everyone got a section of the school shield to finger-paint, and we put them together into an enormous shield behind the stage where everyone can see. We sang happy birthday to the school, cheering and screaming and we did a huge Mexican wave across the comedor which was fun! I was the

lucky soul who ended up on bus duty that day and honestly isn't it joyful being trapped on a bus with 70 over-excited, sugar-filled, hyperactive kids! Ah, it's a fun life.

Something crazy happens around here near enough every day to the point where I am no longer surprised by anything. I never knew how funny kids could be! Every single day I laugh hysterically, I am hugged by thousands of children as they arrive to school; I am insane with frustration, tearful with joy and can't help but give up and laugh some more when I think about it all. I wouldn't have it any other way.



Isabelle with her family at the presentation of the Bursary Fund cheque at St Thomas of Canterbury Church, Bolton

My wonderful Honduran parents are always ready to offer their wisdom and advice and I couldn't have asked for better friends here; fellow teachers, adventure friends, Spanish school group, dance friends, the sign language group. I never thought I'd meet so many people here who think just the way I do. Every now and then, when I'm walking along that dusty track at sunset or up early in the morning, I get a wave of exhilaration, the heady thrill of the beauty and joy of where I am. It's like that first day ascending through the mountains again, and suddenly everything is new again. I shiver with nostalgia when I think about this place I call home. I feel like I am a part of the landscape, I belong to this dust, these trees, these people. At the same time it's accompanied by the sickening thought I will have to leave all this behind in August. Never will I be able to be with my two true families at once; they are separated by an ocean, a poverty line and a language. I never thought I was capable of loving everything as much as I do here. Of course, nothing is ever easy but

it's worth every second of time and energy and exhaustion.

- Project Trust (Honduras desk officer Felicity and Honduras host Charles George) are coming out to visit us next week so we're looking forward to seeing them! Unfortunately it will be a fairly boring week at school as we will just be doing reviews but it will be good to talk!

- t's a new year and we've started taking more in our (non-existent) free time as well. I'm tutoring a lady English, hoping to restart my Ju-Jitsu self-defence class and me and Alanna have started doing exercise (astonishing, I know) after 7 months of 'embracing the culture' doing none.

I've also taken up sign language class to learn Honduran sign language and communicate more efficiently with my friend who is deaf. I'm really enjoying it and I'm hoping to introduce the kids, as part of a sign language day I'm trying to arrange! We can teach them basic phrases, songs in sign language and the difficulties of communication they take for granted. Honduras had no sign language before the 60's so it's still developing in terms of awareness here.

During the Christmas holidays I applied to Edinburgh University to study Linguistics and was accepted. I'd love to work in something to do with sign language in a country like Honduras. Honduras teaches me every single day; I can barely remember who I used to be or how I used to think before I came here. Hopefully that's a good thing.

I've seen things here I never knew would impact me so profoundly; I have seen families praise God over one tortilla to feed their children whilst next door a TV blares with images of richly adorned American homes; tables laden in food. Such contrast; I guess it's really just a microcosm for the world as it really is. I know now that I will never be satisfied unless I devote my life to others. I've seen how happy people can be with nothing; I've seen how unhappy people are with so much. I've seen things more saddening and more beautiful than I could have ever imagined.

I can't thank everyone enough for helping me to get here. Sorry for the many clichés, Belle x