



the calling

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Filling the Void

My daughter Tatiana was born nineteen years ago in Guatemala with one foot instead of two. Her birth parents worked as recyclers in the local dump and wanted something better for Tatiana than what their community could give to her.



Tatiana Vander Kooy

My wife, Jan, and I were the fortunate ones, because watching Tatiana grow up, go to school, and become an incredible, capable woman has taught our family more about courage and God's provision than any book or instructor ever could.

In general, mission schools lag far behind the established public

and private schools of North America when it comes to the integration of children with physical and mental differences. In many communities within the developing world, a child who is different is very likely to become a beggar, or to be sent away to an orphanage.

Here in *The Calling*, we often talk about the educational value of bringing children of different religions, income groups, and ethnicities together. Let's make sure that children with physical and mental differences are in this mix. They are gifts from God and have something to teach each of us. Without them, we are less strong and less prepared to renew God's world.

We hope that God will use you and your talents to empower Worldwide Christian Schools to inspire and equip schools serving *all* of God's children. We certainly need your help. •


Scott Vander Kooy
President, WWCS-US



Where Do We Begin?

Fostering inclusivity in the developing world

By Emily Klooster

It is already difficult at times to do special education well here in the United States. In the developing world, where there are so many other, more basic challenges to confront such as clean water and providing a school lunch, excelling at special education can seem out of reach.

As a result, Worldwide Christian Schools (WWCS) is just beginning to address the special education topic. As part of the learning process, WWCS began by talking to people who already do it well, both in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Daniel and Avitha Victor run a vocational school in Chennai, India for young people with disabilities called Agape Rehabilitation Centre. Agape uses resources that include accessibility features in Windows and other specialized software, such as a screen-reader for blind students. Avitha says dedicated staff and financial resources are also essential parts of running Agape's specialized program. The Victors believe it is important

for traditional schools to begin incorporating those with special needs as often as possible.

"A traditional academic school must follow the integrated educational system," said Avitha. "Regular schools should start taking students with various disabilities into the regular stream. [They should] appoint Special Educators to work alongside regular teachers in classes that have students with special needs, so that with minimal segregation and extra remedial sessions, the person with a disability can learn like everyone else."

WWCS also spoke with a special education staff member at Grand Rapids Christian Schools (GRCS), a



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Avitha Victor works with students at Agape

well-established school in Michigan that practices mostly inclusive education, meaning a child with special needs is mainstreamed into the regular classroom. This approach uses concepts such as “the circle of friends” where peers are chosen to support and guide the student with special needs. When a student is initially pulled from the classroom for assessment, the teacher explains to the class the challenges he or she may be facing so that there is a better understanding among the child’s peers, creating empathy for the student.

Joy Meyer, Director of Teacher Education at Trinity Christian College in Illinois, also endorses the inclusivity approach.

“I don’t think that schools in developing countries should be trained using special teaching techniques for students with special needs,” she said. “Best practice says that the techniques used for special needs are universal in that they are good for all students. The days of teaching one way to all students are over. Today’s learner needs to be engaged in the learning, [which] needs to be student-centered, not teacher-centered.”

Although GRCS and Trinity are far more advanced in the area of special education than most WWCS Network schools around the globe, approaches such as the circle of friends and student-centered learning do not require any special computer programs, equipment

or additional funding, only inclusivity training, which WWCS is in the beginning stages of developing through its Educational Care™ program. WWCS desires to put the spotlight on special education despite the more basic challenges faced by many schools because we serve an inclusive God.

“Jesus had a heart for the disabled,” said Avitha Victor. “As the Bible says, let us treat a disabled person just as we would love to be treated if we were in their place. Treat them as equals, include them in every activity possible.” • Watch for special education updates in future issues of *The Calling*, or visit wwcs.org/teach to learn more.



The Rewards of Special Education

- **Jobs** for those who didn’t dare to dream of one
- **Emotional healing** leading to laughter in those who have forgotten how to even smile
- **Dignity** for those who were on the floor, after being gifted with a wheelchair
- **Self-worth** in individuals when they experience firsts in their lives such as going shopping, to the beach or to a restaurant

Submitted by Daniel and Avitha Victor, Agape Rehabilitation Centre in India



Learn more about Worldwide Hands at wwcs.org/build.

Together, We Build

A School for Chuixchimal, Guatemala



By Emily Klooster

The floor of Esmirna School in the town of Chuixchimal was poured on September 23, 2012, marking an important day in a large, year-long community effort to provide Christ-centered education for this small town in the Western Highlands of Guatemala.

A total of 293 church members from the region went to the school site that day to haul, pour and smooth the cement for the floor and ceiling, providing the foundation for future classrooms.

“It was fascinating to see everyone hauling water, cement and gravel to feed the two cement mixers and hoist the buckets up the ladders,” said Loren Anderson of WWCS partner EduGuate.

Four Worldwide Hands teams worked alongside community members over the course of the project. Anderson reported that the school is still in need of doors, floors and furniture before students can be welcomed there, but classes did officially begin in January with 24 students, using the church facilities next to the new school property.

“This is the first giant step forward,” Anderson said. •



Educational Care™ Moves Forward with Special Education Plan

By Emily Klooster

Special education and learning disabilities are not foreign concepts to most educators in the developing world, but how to address them effectively is a recurring challenge that has only recently been introduced in most teacher education courses. The issue for WWCS is that most teachers participating in the Educational Care™ (EC) program have little to no exposure to such degree-level courses.

“When asking for suggestions for further EC modules, this topic is always mentioned among the top items on the ‘we need this’ list,” said Dale Dieleman, Executive Director for the Educational Care Institute (ECI). “ECI cannot force schools to develop whole-school inclusivity plans and strategies. What we can do is nurture a spirit for inclusivity as something Christian schools ought to do, beginning on the school leadership levels.”



ECI was first approached

by occupational therapist Jessica Roost, who saw a need for training teachers with no formal exposure to simple classroom techniques in inclusivity during a trip to Africa. ECI is now in the process of developing a team

“[Special education training] is always mentioned among the top items on the ‘we need this’ list.”

of experts in the inclusive education field to write a module led by Roost that will assist schools in developing their own programs.

ECI is currently consulting with agencies such as Christian Reformed World Missions, Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church’s Office for Disability Concerns, as well as other denominations and

Launch of Educational Care Institute

The expansion of Educational Care™ around the globe has created a high demand for trainings resulting in an increased need for administration and financial resources to support the ongoing operational costs needed to meet the demand.

Now, the Educational Care Institute (ECI) has been formed to consolidate administrative and funding services while developing a growing Train-the-Trainer program to more effectively reach teachers and school leaders within their communities!

Learn more by contacting Dale Dieleman at ddieleman@wwcs.org.

professors of education in Africa who will be included from the beginning as part of the writing, review and field testing processes.

ECI is committed to completing this project with the help of the professionals involved, and hopefully with the additional financial resources needed to train EC trainers and distribute the module around the world in a variety of languages.

“The vision of Worldwide Christian Schools includes the word ‘access’, and that should mean something to parents and guardians of all children regardless of their learning styles or abilities,” said Dieleman. • Join the effort to distribute ECI’s module for inclusive education by donating at edcareinstitute.org.

Good Food, Clean Water

WWCS work team collaborates to provide lunch and water access in the Dominican Republic

Eleven volunteer workers (Worldwide Hands) from Drenthe Christian Reformed Church in Zeeland, MI worked alongside local laborers in the Dominican Republic (DR) this past January to build a kitchen, water tower, and drill a well at Jerico Christian School in the village of Batey Fao.

The Drenthe team worked alongside Dominican school association COCREF, with volunteers from Mika’s Lunch, a Holland, MI-based group that is providing a noon-day meal at Jerico, and DesCo, there to provide clean water for the students and community.

“The reward was to see how each of these groups was able to work together to improve the quality of education and life for the students,” said team leader Doug Walcott.

The team worked with a local foreman and laborers,

and they were amazed by how much they could accomplish without the aid of a common language.

“Our

contact with the school community, especially with Carolina the principle, became a relationship of real Christian love for her and her staff,” Walcott said. “It is obvious that Jerico School is probably the best thing that is happening [in Fao]. Kids are getting an education, they are now being fed a meal every week day. My hope and prayer is that over time, this school will give enough people an education who can then begin slowly to make a positive change in that community.” •



Drenthe members in the Dominican Republic

This is Where He Wants Me

Work team volunteer turns teacher in the Dominican Republic

By Allison Van Dommelen

EDITOR'S NOTE: Allison Van Dommelen participated in two Worldwide Hands work trips (wwcs.org/build) during her time at Trinity Christian College near Chicago, IL. The first was to Belize, where she helped construct a preschool building, and the second was to Honduras for similar work. Both times she went with Steve Geurink (WWCS) and two of her professors. Inspired by her trips with WWCS, she now teaches in the Dominican Republic.

Going to Belize was my first experience outside of the U.S. The stories of the teachers from the school were inspiring, and I felt so glad to be able to do a small part in the ministry there.

We were also able to tour another school there. Each classroom was in its own little hut built on stilts. Listening to the teachers explain what a typical day was like and some of their difficulties made it sound challenging, but kind of in a way that would stretch one's creativity. It also seemed like a very special place to be and live.

When in Honduras, we were able to see a little more of the area surrounding the school. The first

Sunday we were there, we attended a church and our professors discovered that a Trinity alumni was working at a nearby school. We were able to go and see their campus and hear about his experience.

I was able to see several different school environments while on these trips. I heard from a variety of people the ways God was moving in their ministries. There were now many thoughts in my mind of what teaching overseas would be like.

In 2005, a friend from college and I were talking about her

These trips had given me some knowledge to draw upon and excited me for what could be.

experience in the Dominican Republic. I was teaching in the States and wasn't satisfied in my position. I was looking for a change. She told me about where she taught, at Santiago Christian School. I prayed about it for several months and recalled my experiences in Belize and Honduras. These trips had given me some knowledge to draw upon and excited me for what could be.

Now, I have been teaching 4th grade at Santiago Christian School since 2006. In these seven years,



Allison with her class in the Dominican Republic

God has been teaching me more and more about becoming dependent upon Him, helping me grow as a professional, and creating lifelong friendships, all while being used by Him to serve His children. I've been part of leading chapel for three years. It's inspiring to hear our students worship the Lord!

I've realized that I need to just be patient and listen for His next move for my life. For now I feel that being at Santiago Christian School is where He wants me. •

Please pray for healing and peace for WWCS staff member Steve Geurink and his wife Linda, children Lisa, Grant, Victoria and Glenn, and their extended family, as Steve fights a reoccurrence of cancer. Steve has been with Worldwide Christian Schools for about fourteen years and currently serves as our Vice President of Operations. He is a spiritual giant who continues to show us and others what God looks like. - The WWCS Staff



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For a full staff listing, visit our website at wwcs.org.

OUR VISION To glorify God by ensuring that all children have access to Christ-centered education.



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