



COLEGIO ANEXO SAN FRANCISCO DE ASÍS

By Jennifer Malaver
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Dear Friends and Collaborators of CASFA,

Greetings of PEACE and GOOD from Bogotá, Colombia! Our 2022-2023 school year has just finished and we are excited to share an update with you on the "VERY GOOD NEWS" of our semester, which you so generously continue to help make possible!



We have a new Science Lab

Last year, we applied for a grant offered by Donaldson Foundation to finance projects that promote the development of scientific skills among students from low socioeconomic communities. With great joy, we were awarded the grant, which allowed us to acquire laboratory equipment for experimentation and research for the students at CASFA. With that we have embarked on a journey to build, adapt, and make the dream of having a science lab for our students a reality. Finally, in June, we officially inaugurated this space!

The lab was designed to strengthen and apply the theoretical knowledge shared in class for use in a practical and real context. And we are certainly fulfilling our purpose! Students from fourth to eleventh (Seniors) grade have had the opportunity to visit the lab and carry out laboratory experiments. They were able to identify changes in states of matter, and recognize parts of flowers and microorganisms through the microscope. The entire community is happy and grateful for the new Lab. The students were very excited about the practical work and recognized the value of these experiences for understanding natural phenomena.

And now, what's next for The Lab?

We are working on the development of an experimental science project that provides students with training focused on solving everyday problems that impact and transform their lives and their community. For example: conducting pH studies of soil for urban gardens; studying water potability, as there are issues with water sanitation in some parts of the neighborhood; and developing entrepreneurial initiatives.

The Lab opens up numerous possibilities for developing critical and creative thinking for students, while fostering their commitment to the community, as it allows them to generate a positive impact on social transformation. We thank the Donaldson Foundation, the effort of the Franciscan Sisters, our science teachers, and all of you, because together we continue working for a better education and future for our children and youth.



Our Annual Forum: 'Cuando el Cauca suena memorias lleva'

Since 2016, our ninth-grade students have been engaged in a project aimed at building collective memory, taking as reference the armed conflict in our country. This project was led through Social Studies class, and this year it materialized in a forum. The forum served as a meeting point for students and teachers from other public and private educational institutions, as well as experts, leaders, and social organizations experienced in memory, peace, and reconciliation.



This year, the event was named "Cuando el Cauca suena, memorias lleva" ("When the Cauca sounds, memories carry"). In our country, the Cauca River

has been a war-torn area. Because thousands of bodies had been found in the river in past years, we wanted to participate in a sensitive educational project. The victims are no longer with us due to forced disappearances, however, we keep their presence in our minds and hearts. We used the metaphor of "listening to the river" to give identity to 46 missing people. Have you ever thought about how some places tell us stories? Based on files compiled by the Marsella Municipality Fire Department (Risaralda), the students selected specific information about the features of the bodies when they were initially found. Using that description, the students assigned names and identities to some people, as they reflected on what each body had to tell. Through this exercise, the students recognized the humanity of the victims, realizing that apart from just being one more number from the heartbreaking statistic of violence in Colombia, the victims were individuals with their own stories.

The students tried to capture the identity of the missing people through shoes, since they showed the journey of life. What would your shoes say about your story? For example, someone assigned the name "Carmenza" to one of the victims and imagined her as a seamstress, so they decorated the shoe with buttons, thread, and a needle. Another victim was named "Tomás", a child who loved playing soccer, and so a student decorated the shoe with a small soccer field. In addition to visiting the exhibitions of shoes and stories created by the students, attendees also participated in practical workshops focused on historical events of Colombia, reconciliation with the river, with others, and with oneself. The goal was to have a day filled with experiences of rebuilding collective memory, providing a space for peace, and reflecting on the victims of the armed conflict, highlighting the humanity we all share.

Noche Artística: De Cuerpos a Memorias, los secretos que cuenta un río

(From Bodies to Memories, the Secrets Told by a River)

Following the theme of the forum, and as the culmination of this entire process, teachers from music, arts and body expression joined together to create with all of the students an amazing show full of stories that transported us to different places, awakened our emotions, and made our dream of a country with peace, truth, justice, and reparation. The artistic night narrated the story of a family of fishermen composed of Aurelio, the father; Carmén, the mother; Alejito, the son; Herminia, the grandmother; and Emilio, the uncle.



After a long time without news from Aurelio, who was a victim of forced disappearance, Alejito finally receives the long-awaited visit from his father. Following the family tradition, Aurelio had the task of teaching his son to fish. They began their journey with a big family breakfast, then built the canoe with the help of Emilio, wove the fishing net with Grandma Herminia, and finally embarked together on a trip along the Cauca River, where Alejito will learn to fish. However, as they progressed on their journey, father and son realized that their purpose was not to catch fish but to capture memories and stories.



Throughout the trip, both Alejito and the audience were invited to listen to the river and pay attention to the whispers of those who, despite being physically absent, continued to exist and remain here. Those distant whispers reminded us of Colombian people who had never been named or heard. We understood that their stories and lives continue to be among us. The performance attempted to give voice to people who had been silenced and to make their experiences visible for everyone. As a school, we committed to education with values that will help alumni to create a better country for all human beings.

"From Bodies to Memories" gave us a night of music, dance, and theater performance that will remain in the hearts of all who were part of this event. With great excitement, we invite you to watch this remarkable performance, as words are not enough to describe the touching and exciting experience we lived that night:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywL35GPfe5Y>

Storytime and Game Time: Pre-kindergarten Project

As the culmination of the school year, the pre-kindergarten class had a day full of fun, lessons, and learning. The students invited their parents to a space where they read them a story and taught them a game they had been working on throughout the year.

Through the reading of images, the children wrote a story, assigned names to the characters, and connected to what was happening in the story. This exercise was aimed at helping the children understand that we express ideas and thoughts through letters, and taught them the writing process itself. In the development of their logical-mathematical skills, the students learned a game similar to a "parques" game, through which they were able to understand the concept of quantity and count from 0 to 9.



The parents were excited to witness their children's progress and listened to the sweet and amusing stories they had to share. They also had a lot of fun playing and following their children's counting. Our little ones felt like authentic writers and teachers, and it was a special moment for all the families.

We have entered into an agreement with UNICERVANTES!



Since February 2023, we have partnered with UNICERVANTES the Agustinian University Foundation in Bogotá, with the purpose of providing eleventh-grade students (Seniors) with a university immersion experience during their second semester of school. This agreement is part of our life project program, which aim is to guide and develop students' competencies, skills, and techniques, contributing to their life plans, personal growth, and improvement of the community's quality of life.

From February until the present month, our eleventh-grade students (Seniors) have been able to attend the university and take a first semester class of one of the programs offered by UNICERVANTES. This way, they have been able to enjoy the academic and non-academic benefits of a great institution, such as digital and physical libraries, student welfare services, transportation, sports and academic facilities, among others. Those who wish to continue their education at the institution can do so. We were delighted to have students involved in courses belonging to professional programs, including Law, Psychology, Political Science, Business Administration, Finance, and International Business. In their own words, this experience has motivated them to explore the professions they wish to pursue now that they have completed secondary education, and to affirm or reconsider, their interests. It has also provided them with tools for the transition to university life, and has allowed them to realize that they have an excellent foundation for the next stage of life.

Closures and Graduation

As part of the preparation for the graduation ceremony of the Transition, Fifth, and Ninth grades, every year the students of these grades participate in a "Closure Retreat," in which they focus on the main principles and characteristics of a CASFA student. The Pastoral team organizes activities to foster teamwork, develop leadership and critical thinking skills, and promote joy, respect for differences, and solidarity. This year, we are pleased to announce that, in addition to these closure retreats, we organized a gathering to conclude the educational cycle with the eleventh-grade students (Seniors). On June 3rd, we held a retreat with the students at Sisga (a location approximately an hour away from Bogotá), where they reflected



on the journey they have taken thus far, the family they have formed with their classmates, the principles they have built, and the commitments they assume in this new stage of their lives. Their reflections focused on the San Damiano Cross, a symbol they receive on their graduation day. It was a day filled with joy, nostalgia, and many hugs!

On June 8th, our Transition, Fifth, and Ninth-grade students closed a chapter at their school with the celebration of their graduation and received the Tau Cross as a Franciscan symbol representing the process of transformation and change. On June 9th, our eleventh-grade students had their graduation ceremony and received the San Damiano Cross as a symbol of their commitment, faith, and journey in CASFA. We congratulate all our students and wish them a future filled with blessings and growth.

MANY THANKS for your wonderful, faithful support and care that makes all of this possible!!

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