

# Bilingual Education for Central America

**Our Mission:** Bilingual Education for Central America (“BECA”) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization founded in 2002. An idea born in the homes of several Honduran families has grown into a community-led bilingual school model run in partnership with low-income communities in Honduras.

BECA’s mission is to provide quality, affordable bilingual education to the educationally disenfranchised while fostering meaningful cultural exchange. Our provision of bilingual education to low-income students is a community driven, solutions-oriented response to multiple issues impacting Honduras and the United States - a lack of educational opportunity, stagnating economic development, insufficient jobs, and deepening inequality.

**An Innovative Educational Model:** BECA recruits, trains, and fully supports service-minded, social justice oriented, English-speaking volunteers who commit to teaching with BECA for one, two, or three years of full-time service. By providing teachers to our Honduran partner schools and partnering with local community members to empower them as leaders of their own schools, tuition is kept at rates accessible to community members. And, 50% of our student population receive full or partial scholarship, ensuring that a BECA education is accessible to even the most impoverished members of the community. BECA builds relationships with our scholarship families through a work-service program that allows families to contribute their time and talents in lieu of tuition. Scholarship families’ volunteer service contribute greatly to the overall health and functionality of the school and as a result the most financially disadvantaged families are consistently our most involved school community members and often become leaders in the broader community.



Providing educational access for at-risk youth and the most financially disadvantaged members of a community is a defining characteristic of our program; it is no mistake that “**beca**” means “scholarship” in Spanish.

**Our Community Partners:** BECA’s model is not your run-of-the-mill international teaching program. We distinguish ourselves by the breadth and depth of our community engagement. Local stakeholders maintain responsibility for the effective management of their schools. By building close-knit relationships with our in-country partners, we encourage capacity building and create avenues towards sustainability. We also allow for a democratic process to flourish in the local community; all parents have a voice in how their children are educated. The governing members are accountable for their decisions and they must provide for complete financial transparency, just as BECA does. Furthermore, we advocate a holistic community-based approach to our work rather than one that simply takes place in the classroom. Our schools, San Jeronimo Bilingual School (“SJBS”), Santa Monica Bilingual School (“SMBS”), and Amigos de Jesus Bilingual School (“ADJBS”) function as the focal point for their entire communities. This is apparent in the frequency that one finds “BECA parents” contributing at the schools and BECA volunteers visiting the homes of their students.

**Our Volunteer Impact:** It is important to note the tremendous impact that the experience of living and teaching in Honduras has on every one of our volunteers, and the way that impact translates into a lifetime of service. From their time with BECA, these individuals will have an increased understanding of the real issues faced by Central American citizens and will possess a sense of social justice in accordance with that experience. From our experience we know that these volunteers will continue to give of their time and resources to work toward equity both in Honduras as well as here at home. BECA teachers go on to become Fulbright scholars, microfinance specialists, US Foreign Service Officers, school teachers, World Bank employees, medical doctors with a social justice approach to patient care, immigration lawyers working on the border in Texas, outreach ministry directors, and so many other things.

### **Why Honduras and Why Bilingual Education?**

Only 35% of Hondurans who complete primary school continue to the secondary level, and enrollment numbers at colleges and universities are lower still. By supplying high quality bilingual education, BECA is equipping our students for success in high school and college, thereby providing them with access to much greater personal and professional opportunities than they would otherwise be afforded. After honing our program's model over the past 14 years, we are seeing the fruits of our labor. Out of BECA's first 157 graduates, 155 matriculated high school (99%). Our oldest graduates are now working as engineers, translators, call center operators, teachers and more! Given the limited resources of the communities, this represents an exceptional success rate and indicates to us that not only have our students been academically prepared, but their parents have been equipped to creatively address the increased financial commitment entailed in sending their children to bilingual high schools – some of our students have secured scholarships directly from schools, some have received the “BECA Bachillerato Program” (BBP) scholarship directly from us, and others have been able to save resources during their time at a BECA partner school – a testament to these families' commitment to their children's education, or work with other programs or individuals that have provided scholarship assistance.



**Our Future:** We are proud of all that our volunteers and our students have accomplished, but we are by no means content to stop learning and growing. Our newest school partnerships are flourishing, our core education model is thriving, and our volunteer program is growing. At the same time, immigrant communities are at great risk in the U.S. and Honduras. Our Central American neighbors have ever more limited options when it comes to protecting their families' well being. With those risks and realities in mind, BECA has completed a 5-year Strategic Plan focused on ensuring that our Honduran partners and their families and friends are equipped for success.

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