K thru 12 Bilingual Curriculum For Volunteer Professors

Concept:

As a thesis project a student designs or adapts an existing K through 12, dual language (Spanish and English) curriculum to be taught on San Cristobal, Galapagos by international volunteer professors who will spend a year or a semester here. The curriculum will be used by the professors to insure the students receive sequential courses of study.

The goal of the school:

-To give at least some of the children living here on San Cristobal a primary through secondary education commensurate with the responsibility of their birth right, the care of these islands. It is hoped that at least some of the students will be able to garner scholarships to study in International Universities when they graduate.

Definitions and Clarifications:

-"Curriculum", signifies an entire education, Kindergarten through High School.
-Duel Language signifies that the students who graduate will be fluent in both languages, Spanish and English. How this is accomplished will be up to the curriculum. Spanish is the national language of Ecuador and spoken almost exclusively here on San Cristobal.
-The curriculum is intended to be followed by the students from Kindergarten to the end of High School. Its relationship, if any to existing curriculums in other schools here will only be circumstantial, however it is expected that: not all students who begin in Kindergarten will finish, that their places will be filled by students who will not have had the same advantages as those that began in Kindergarten and that the existence of this school will have an impact on the education levels and focus in other schools on the island. This needs to be considered in how the curriculum is designed, providing a means for students outside the school to study the same materials, though obviously without the help of professors. Perhaps an outreach program might be part of the curriculum. Some of the students, as part of their study would tutor kids outside the school in an effort to give them a "leg up" on entrance should a space become available and give the

students within the school an opportunity to grow from sharing what they have been privileged to learn.
-The subjects that are emphasized, from what perspective they are taught and teaching methods will be up to the curriculum. Naturally, environmental issues and how the Galapagos relates to the rest of the world should be addressed in the curriculum. Also, please read below under the heading "Campus", the availability of "hands on" agricultural (biology) and alternative construction education (engineering).
-It is assumed the courses of study will be internet integrated and that class room materials will be selected with the location of the school in mind.
-Class size will be the choice of the curriculum (expected in the ten to twenty maximum range, assuming considerations will be made for not only the ability to teach/learn subject materials, but also developing social/interpersonal skills). At this time we are considering only one class for each grade.
-A mechanism for resourcing and qualifying volunteer professors would be part of the thesis along with careful consideration of how they would be "plugged" into the curriculum. Each professor will be teaching all of the subject matter for each class/grade (history, biology, etc. etc).

Note:

As several PhD's have pointed out to me, this is a "tall order" for a thesis. The student who designs this curriculum will have more than the myriads of choices already inherent in designing a K through 12 curriculum. This would be a curriculum that is duel language, internet integrated, staffed by volunteer professors that come and go every six months or year, taught on an island six hundred miles off the coast of a third world nation most famous for bananas. Yes, "tall order". The student would absolutely need to spend some time here on San Cristobal.

Volunteer Professors:

We understand the logistics of bringing professors here on a volunteer basis. My wife founded and headed up the B&B association here for several years, most of her guests were volunteer teachers and workers etc. Also our company Come To Galapagos, LLC and in Ecuador, Come To Galapagos CIA. LTDA. (www.cometogalapagos.com) often handles volunteers. We set up an Endemic (plant) Species Recovery Park on

our farm in the highlands with volunteer help and coordination by the Charles Darwin Foundation. We even had a doctor here once giving wilderness first aid lessons to the people working in the Galapagos National Park.

The professors would teach five days a week, reside in a "home stay" for a semester or a year. They would have to pay for their arrival, food, housing and there is an administrative fee for all the governmental paper work (also saves the volunteers from paying the full Galapagos entry fee) which is typical of volunteers and only a fraction of what it costs for the same in the US.

Campus:

Two acres have been donated for the campus by Come To Galapagos. These acres are held in a "trust escrow" until the campus is built, the school is functioning with all thirteen classes, the administration is set, tuition revenue from the families of the students has been established and a board of directors is in place at which time the title to the property will be turned over to the board of directors. The class rooms, instructional buildings, etc. will be built with a volunteer program using alternative construction (earth bag). This is to bring a greater public awareness here in the Galapagos of bioclimatic building designs and to create an energy responsible campus, both in its construction and use. A part of the curriculum might involve agriculture and alternative construction methods /bioclimatic design, which could be done right on campus, or directly off campus.

Why Not Work Within The Existing Education System on San Cristobal?

As mentioned in the cover letter the existing level of education here leaves quite a bit to be desired. This is due to a number of factors, class size, availability of educational materials, quality of teachers and administrators and it is exasperated by the fact that the families that tend to be involved in the education of their children become so frustrated attempting to work within the existing schools, that they will often go so far as to split up the family, sending their kids to the continent or out right move the entire family to the continent for the sake of their children's education. The local schools here then lack this entire segment of the population resulting in a somewhat stymied cultural environment at the schools.

Implementation of School and Curriculum:

Once we have the curriculum, we want to begin the school with the Kindergarten class only the first year. The second year have the kindergarten class and first grade, the second year, Kindergarten, first and second grades, etc. until we have all thirteen years of study functioning. This will allow us time to build the school, raise funds and public awareness. The costs of the school will rise at a predictable rate and the first batch of unforeseen problems will arise at a time when the school is of a manageable size.

Funding:

Our current idea is to set tuition at $150 per month per student. This is a manageable amount for most families living here. Very poor day care costs $120 a month including meals and the facility is over crowded. We would also like to have a "scholarship" or two available in each grade for the less affluent families on the island. Our thinking is that when fully functioning the school will need one care taker and several administers. If class size were 15 (just as an example, the student writing the curriculum will have to come up with the optimum number) that would be 195 students and the school's revenue would be somewhere around $29,250 minus say twenty-six scholarships (2 times the thirteen grades) $3,900 = $25,350 a month which would be enough to salary the administrators, pay for maintenance and some percentage of materials. Obviously we will be pursuing grants and sponsorships to help with purchasing computers, books, etc.

Personal Note To Students Considering Taking This On (back story):

We meet many "students" here from many countries who come to work on their various theses. Most of these theses are related to biology, geology, environment, social/psychological, cultural, political, etc. The students tend to seek us out for various reasons, our experience, position in the community, the fact that I'm a gringo (with perspectives shaped by different exposures), our accomplishments, our business, Come To Galapagos www.cometogalapagos.com, our "connections", etc. Most of their theses have very little direct impact on the Galapagos or the people living here. In this case, this thesis would be an exception.

Without a doubt the best way to preserve the Galapagos would be to remove the entire population and prohibit tourism. Since neither of

those are likely to happen, the next most logical steps would be: A, to limit the population, which the government of Ecuador has taken steps to do and is accomplishing to a certain extent and B, to limit tourism, which the government of Ecuador at this point does not appear willing to do.

Given the above and our years of experience here we have come to the conclusion that there are two areas of effort that will have the greatest positive impact on the future of the Galapagos.

The first is an education of travelers *before* they make their choices of how to visit the Galapagos, in other words tackling the problems from the supply side. The pertinent information that people seeking to visit the Galapagos should be aware of is the last thing the travel industry as it relates to the Galapagos wants to disseminate. Companies go to great lengths to "green wash" themselves in order to continue making money off the Galapagos. A vacation here probably has the greatest carbon footprint of any vacation on earth. The vast majority of visitors that come to Galapagos expand this footprint still farther by choosing cruise tours. These are ships that drive around the Galapagos islands, dumping raw sewage into the ocean, ripping up reefs with their anchors, leaving their trash in our dumps, burning fossil fuels 24/7 which need to be imported to the Galapagos and the majority of these ships are owned by people whose only connection to the Galapagos is as a place to make money. Less than five percent of all the tourism revenue generated by the Galapagos touches the hands of the people that live here. If people were better educated about the realities of the Galapagos today before they made their choices on how and with whom to visit these islands that by itself would solve many of the problems we face without involving governmental restrictions.

The second area of effort is the education of the people that actually live here, the people that have the day to day greatest impact on these islands. Truth is that the majority of the people living here have far greater concerns about their livelihood than the environment. It is strange that here in the Galapagos of all places on earth that people have a hard time seeing the relationship between their environment and their livelihood. What we lack for the integration of concerns for livelihood and environment is simply education and it needs to start at a young age. Imagine the impact a generation of well educated Galapagos citizens could have here in the Galapagos and on the world's perception of the Galapagos.

We are not entirely altruistic in this endeavor:

We have a two year old son and have thought about his education since his inception. We have decided to do something positive and attainable rather than run from the problem or bang our heads against the wall of an ensconced bureaucracy. We have many friends starting families who are excited about this idea. It is difficult to watch many of the best of the kids living here forced to be shipped off the island to receive an adequate education, forced to leave the place of their birth and one of the most cherished World Heritage Sites on the planet.

How will this help the level of education in other schools?

With regard to improving all the schools in the Galapagos, believe me when I say if we succeed in this undertaking and I think we will every parent on the island will want their kid to be in this school. The competition to get in will be fierce. I've lived here six years and one thing I can say for my friends and neighbors is that while they're not very receptive to new ideas, show them something that works and they are wonderful imitators.

The kids here are thirsty for a good education. My wife helped run a project in 2004 at the High School. The kids learned about electricity, how it works, where it comes from, the real world costs and then went out and monitored the electric use of appliances in houses throughout the community. People started turning off the radio and lights when they left the house, many replaced ancient refrigerators and equally remarkable that year was the only year in the history of the school that every student in the senor class graduated.

Student Thesis Review Notes:

- This curriculum is for an entire education, dual language (Spanish, English) Kindergarten through High School
- Most students will follow the entire curriculum
- A mechanism will need to be in place for preparing students to enter the school who have not had the advantage of beginning at Kindergarten, perhaps students within the school as part of the curriculum tutor kids outside the school
- The classes will be taught by visiting professors who will teach all the subjects of a given grade
- The curriculum should be: internet integrated, designed for children growing up in the Galapagos, may include "hands on"

agriculture (biology) and alternative construction (engineering) and as mentioned above out reach tutoring

- A mechanism should be incorporated within the thesis for resourcing and qualifying volunteer professors
- The student will need to spend some time here, at least one week. While we can not afford to pay for the student's travel, we can certainly pay for their room and board once they are here and of course will show them around.