



*A Summit of the Americas Initiative for Child Literacy*

## Ready, CETT, Go!

### *Hemispheric Child Literacy Initiative Launched*

Education institutions in 13 Latin American and Caribbean countries have begun training for over 15,000 teachers to improve child literacy throughout the hemisphere. "We are committed to making education a centerpiece of our economic agenda – because learning and literacy are the foundations for development and democracy," said President George W. Bush when he announced his support for and commitment to the Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT) program at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec.

Parents are also speaking out in favor of the CETT program. "None of my children can read or write very well and I am worried for them," said Maria Parada Duran of Bolivia. Ms. Duran is happy that her children's school will be among the first to participate in the CETT program.

Dedicated teachers like Angelina Polius from St. Lucia are also eager about this program. "We need training for purposeful reading and writing instruction. This is why I am excited about the CETT program, and especially so about the involvement of parents and the community to support our children and their teachers," she said.

Teachers inspire children to learn and the CETT program has all of the elements necessary to become an extremely effective literacy initiative for children in this region. By replicating best practices in literacy education, which uses a train the trainers approach with classroom support, this program will benefit more than 500,000 children in the first three grades where developing sound literacy skills is most important for life long learning.

Active private sector involvement is integral to the success of the CETT program. The combined

### *"Teachers Inspiring Children to Read"*



*Deniere Riviere Primary School in St. Lucia*

leadership and support of private sector institutions offers the best chance for sustainable impact at the community level so even more children can be reached. "We are delighted to be a part of CETT. We have long supported effective community-based education programs in Latin America that build on the media strengths of the Cisneros Companies," said Beatrice Rangel of the Fundación Cisneros, a CETT partner.

Throughout the region, persistent poverty and stagnant economies hinder full participation in the global marketplace. Education offers the answer and is key to promoting development, jobs, and economic well-being. The ability to read and write is the foundation of all learning.

Too many children in Latin America and the Caribbean today lack the literacy skills they need for success in life. This program is offering children, like those of Ms. Duran, as well as teachers like Ms. Polius, new hope for the future and new opportunities for life.



## Education is Everybody's Business

**Public and private sector leaders are working together to support the CETT program.** First Lady of the United States, Laura Bush, wrote, "President Bush and I strongly support your goal of improving the reading skills of children at the earliest grade levels. Learning to read is the cornerstone of success in school and in life. We are also grateful to the companies, foundations, faith-based organizations and individuals who are contributing to this worthwhile program."



White House photo by Susan Sterner

First Lady of the United States Laura Bush.

According to Adolfo A. Franco, Assistant Administrator of the Latin America and Caribbean Bureau of the U.S. Agency for International Development, "We can no longer expect governments alone to address the challenges to our education systems. Education has become everybody's business."

Indeed, the corporations and governmental organizations now working for child literacy are delivering a strong message that a well-educated population is the cornerstone of social and economic development.

Organizations like Fundación Cisneros, Scholastic, and Sesame Workshop in the U.S. have long had a commitment to supporting education. "Scholastic works with a wide variety of public, private and non-profit organizations that share our mission of providing teachers and students access to high quality, affordable books and educational resources to help all children learn and grow. Scholastic's commitment to reading and literacy supports CETT's initiatives to provide essential classroom materials for children in our global community," said Richard Robinson, Chairman, President and CEO of Scholastic Inc.

In the Caribbean, the private sector has also become involved. Christopher Zacca, Vice Chairman of Air Jamaica, discussed his company's commitment to education and support for CETT at the launch of the regional CETT program in Jamaica. "We firmly believe that as a major force in the Jamaican society, our support of educational empowerment for the less privileged is essential as we contribute to the goal of nation building," he said.

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*Richard Robinson, Chairman,  
President and CEO, Scholastic Inc.*

**Prime Minister P.J. Patterson of Jamaica and Prime Minister Said Musa of Belize** acknowledged Air Jamaica and Illuminat of Barbados as the first companies to support the program, as they joined dozens of other government officials, educators, and business leaders for the official launch of the Caribbean Regional Center of Excellence for Teacher Training.

The private sector also is playing a key role in addressing the extreme lack of learning resources and the inherent challenges teachers face in successfully introducing new approaches in marginal urban and rural schools. Private sector support will help develop and augment libraries and learning resources for participating primary schools; establish incentive programs for the classroom and master teachers; and create a fund that will assure the ongoing sustainability of the program.



*Private sector panelists at the University of Texas, Austin, CETT Networking Conference. From left to right: Merri Gutierrez, Scholastic; Ramon Rodriguez, BellSouth Foundation; Yolanda Platón, Sesame Workshop; and Irene Hardy de Gómez., Fundación Cisneros*

## Best Teachers Plus Best Practices Equals Best Outcomes

The CETT program uses a results driven approach to achieve success in child literacy. All of the participating education institutions were selected based on the highest standards for quality and professionalism.

“USAID assessment teams visited 15 countries and spoke with over 400 university faculty, teacher educators, and Ministers of Education about teacher training and reading instruction. We believe this process helped us make better decisions about the institutions selected,” said Adolfo A. Franco, USAID Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Ministries of Education of each participating country have endorsed this program. They view the voluntary association between the Centers and participating primary schools as a creative way to infuse new thinking and new resources into basic education. For many of the teachers entering the CETT program, this will be the first time that they have received extensive formal training in reading education.

“All of the Centers use a ‘train the trainer’ methodology. Master teachers are trained for each region and, in turn, train teachers from the participating schools. A key element of the program is that master teachers also follow-up with classroom visits over an extended period to coach, model, and supervise. The goal is to reach the maximum number of teachers and children in disadvantaged areas with better approaches to their reading education,” said Dave Evans, Team Leader, Education and Human Resources at USAID.

“We are especially interested in the use of distance-learning methodologies to dramatically increase the number of teachers and children that can be reached in the long term,” said Beatrice Rangel of the Fundación Cisneros. The program operated by the University of the West Indies necessarily leans heavily on distance learning methodologies due to geography. Nur University in Bolivia and the highly regarded Latin American Institute for Education Communication, based in Mexico City, are testing distance-learning capabilities in their regions.

## Caribbean Teacher Supports Training

### St. Lucia—

As Angelina Polius makes her way to Deniere Riviere Primary School in St. Lucia where she teaches first grade, she always considers her responsibility to the children in her care.



Miss Angelina Polius

On this day, her main concern is reading. “Reading is a basic skill for a child’s success in school and through life,” she says, but too many of her students are struggling.

Everyday, Deniere Riviere Primary school quickly fills with almost 400 noisy, excited children from the surrounding rural community. St. Lucia’s rich cultural history has resulted in children coming to school speaking French Creole but being educated in English, the island’s official language.

“My students want to read about their culture and history, and the things that are relevant to their everyday experiences,” Ms. Polius explains. “But many come from poor families and don’t have access to reading materials at home so they depend on the schools for books,” she added.

As a dedicated teacher who sets high standards for student performance, Miss Polius sees the need for improved learning strategies. “Some of us [teachers] who want to make a difference have tried but have not been fortunate enough to access the materials or the training needed for purposeful reading and writing instruction.”

Errol Miller, Co-Director of the Caribbean CETT, recently acknowledged the importance of teachers like Ms. Polius. “Miss Angelina Polius epitomizes the commitment, competence and charisma that characterizes so many Caribbean teachers, both currently and historically. Primary school teachers have been the very bedrock of Caribbean society,” he said.



## Bolivian Parents Await Teacher Training

Angel Baca-Flores has high hopes for his three young children, all of whom go to school in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the capital city of Bolivia's largest district with over 1 million inhabitants. Mr. Baca-Flores' children go to overcrowded schools with too few teachers.



However, Mr. Baca-Flores is not your average parent. He also serves as president of the district parents' association and is extremely involved in his community and its schools. He has visited many of the schools in the city and estimates that most have less than a third of the instructional resources they need.

"I speak with many parents who are worried for their children as I am worried. We want our schools to be the best so our children learn to read and write and are prepared for the future," Mr. Baca-Flores said.

*"We want to support our teachers so they can prepare our children for the future."*

*Angel Baca-Flores*

Fortunately, teachers in Santa Cruz will soon start to receive literacy training through Nur University, the leading private, non-profit university in Bolivia, as part of the CETT program. The Bolivian Ministry of Education and UNESCO recognized Nur University with a "Pioneers in Education" award for its extensive work in training and development programs for primary schools.

"We support our schools and our teachers and want them to be the best," said Mr. Baca-Flores. "When our children learn to read, everything becomes open to them. I want my children to have as many opportunities as possible and learning to read is the key," he added.

According to Rene Milan Alcayne, director of the Unidad Educativa Modulo San Ysidro, "We have already selected the first group of teachers to receive training," referring to the first of 450 teachers from 100 schools that will be trained in Bolivia, benefiting over 18,000 students. "The children in our schools face many challenges, from poverty and malnutrition, to other social problems, but literacy is the foundation of all learning and so we are focusing our efforts here. The parents and the community of Santa Cruz are very supportive of, and grateful for, the CETT program," Mr. Alcayne added.



*Students at Pampa de la Isla school in Santa Cruz, Bolivia*



**INMED**, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is developing private sector participation to help sustain the CETT program. Founded in 1986, INMED is committed to strengthening communities around the globe by developing and supporting public-private partnerships that bring about sustainable advances in health and education.

**For partnership opportunities, contact  
Bill Walsh  
Director, CETT Partnerships Program**

**45449 Severn Way, Suite 161 — Sterling, VA 20166  
Phone (703) 444-4477— Fax (703) 444-4471  
www.inmed.org**