Colombia**

COUNTRY OVERVIEW
CAPITAL: Bogota
POPULATION: 43,677,372
ETHNIC GROUPS: Mestizo (58%), Mulatto (14%), African American (4%), Mixed African Amerindian (3%), Amerindian (1%)
LOCATION: North America, bordering the Caribbean Sea, between Panama and Venezuela, and bordering the North Pacific Ocean, between Ecuador and Panama
CLIMATE: Tropical along east coast and eastern plains, cooler in highlands
RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic (90%), Other (10%)
LANGUAGES: Spanish

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND
TEACHING STYLES – Teacher centered, strict, and demanding. Focus on lectures during which students are expected to take notes. Concepts taught are generally not open to discussion. Teachers will typically stay at the front of the classroom instead of moving around.

LEARNING STYLES – Due to the lack of experience with creativity and critical thinking skills, Colombian students tend to memorize or reproduce what has been taught in the classroom, and it is emphasized throughout the school system. As a result, they may misinterpret information. Although students tend to be kinesthetic, this learning style is often not addressed. Students are often highly visual learners. There is an expectation to stay quiet in class and to listen politely. Active participation isn’t common.

INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING – Classrooms are small, crowded, and in poor condition with minimum decoration on the walls, such as a Colombian map or portrait of a national hero.

DISCIPLINE AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT – Common problems are talking back to the teacher, fighting, smoking, or failing to observe the school’s dress code. Students with unacceptable behavior are sent to the coordinator who asks students to sign a black boo. The coordinator then calls the student’s parents or sends them home.

EDUCATOR-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP – Teachers are not students’ friends. However, educators can be friendly and respectful, while some of them may use grades to manipulate a student’s behavior. Students complaining about their grade is common. At times, they even try to negotiate their grades with the teacher.

STUDENT-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS – Because they stay together in the same classroom during their primary and secondary school years, students and teachers will often form close friendships. The child’s friendships may expand to a friend of the family.

POLITE/IPOLITE TOPICS/BEHAVIORS – Poverty and violence in Colombia are appropriate topics for discussion. Furthermore, Colombians are curious about social issues in other countries, and politics and economy can be a hot topic which may cause eruption between friends.

**All information from the “CIA World Factbook” and “Understanding Your International Students: An Educational, Cultural, and Linguistic Guide” (October, 2010)