Guatemala**

COUNTRY OVERVIEW
CAPITAL: Guatemala City
POPULATION: 12,293,545
ETHNIC GROUPS: Mixed (73%), Caucasian (16%), African American (11%)
LOCATION: Central America, bordered by Pacific Ocean to the east of the Caribbean Sea; bordered by El Salvador and Honduras to the east and west, Mexico and Belize to the north
CLIMATE: Hot and humid in lowlands, cooler and drier in the mountains
RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic; Protestant; indigenous Mayan beliefs
LANGUAGES: Spanish (60%), Amerindian languages (40%). 23 languages are officially recognized, including Quiche, Cakchiquel, Kekchi, Mam, Garifuna, and Xinca

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND
TEACHING STYLES – Teachers will sometimes supplement teachings with audio-visual equipment, computers, or through lectures and seminars presented by visiting experts, although these resources are not always readily available especially in public schools. Secondary level teachers tend to assign more research and group projects than those in primary schools.

LEARNING STYLES – In typical classrooms, students are not encouraged to participate and therefore do not feel comfortable asking for clarification if they don’t understand. Students at both the primary and secondary level enjoy working in groups because it lets them feel they are actively taking part in their education.

INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING – Classrooms tend to be small in comparison to those found in North America, and yet the number of students in one classroom can be twice as great. Reported teacher-student ratio in primary schools is 1:33 and 1:13 in secondary schools. Uniforms and school supplies must be purchased by a student’s family, and is often a financial burden since more than 20% of Guatemala’s population lives on approximately $1 per day

EDUCATOR-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS – Gender discrimination may find its way into the classroom, not only through the textbook and curriculum, but in the differential manner in which teachers treat students. Students are respectful to teachers and consider them as friends and counselors. When necessary, teachers help their students with their confidence. Parents rely on teachers to give their children moral instruction as well as teaching academics.

STUDENT-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS – Students develop warm friendships as they progress through school, although they tend not to study together after class.

POLITE/IMPOLITE TOPICS & BEHAVIORS – Soccer is a popular conversation topic, as the game has an avid following in Guatemala. When talking with a Latino, it’s important to know the person well before broaching the topic of the mistreatment of the Mayans and the socioeconomic gap between Latinos and Mayans. Topics such as illegal drugs, homosexuality, sexuality, international adoption, human right violations, politics in general, and criticism of the Catholic Church are not eagerly welcomed in conversation.

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