Nicaragua**

**COUNTRY OVERVIEW**
CAPITAL: Managua
POPULATION: 5,570,129
ETHNIC GROUPS: Mestizo (69%), Caucasian (17%), African American (9%), Amerindian (5%)
LOCATION: Central America, bordered by the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea; bordered by Honduras and Costa Rica
CLIMATE: Hot and humid in the lowlands; cooler temperatures in higher elevations
RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic (85%), Protestant (15%)
LANGUAGES: Spanish, English and other indigenous languages along the Atlantic coast

**EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

TEACHING STYLES – There is little give-and-take in a typical Nicaraguan classroom. Instead, the teacher lectures while the student transfers as much as possible to their notebooks. Many teachers check those notebooks to ensure that the students have been paying attention. Although teachers assign homework, they do not always check its accuracy. They generally do not assign credit when homework is done appropriately; however, if it is not done or done poorly, teachers tend to subtract points from the student’s grade.

LEARNING STYLES – Students dedicate their energies to noting and memorizing as much as possible of what the teacher has covered in class, knowing that it will constitute as the content for the next exam. Students’ opinions are usually not solicited in class. Routine chatter is discouraged and students who talk during the lesson are usually reprimanded.

INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING – There are normally more children enrolled in a given school than there is room to accommodate them. Therefore, schools will often offer at least two shifts of instruction. One shift is in the morning and lasts until noon, and the second shift starts after lunch. Even in high school and university, the teachers move from classroom to classroom.

DISCIPLINE AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT – Teachers tend to be very strict. Misbehavior is often punished by sending the offending student to the principal’s office, but some teachers will answer misconduct by lowering grades. Teachers assign two types of grades: One for academic performance and one for conduct. Occasionally students will be expelled after a number of warnings have been issued and disregarded.

EDUCATOR-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP – The relationship between teacher and students can be strained as teachers strive to maintain order and students attempt to circumvent rules. At the university level, the relationship between teachers and students is much less restrictive. It is not unusual for some teachers to socialize after class with students. Some may be compelled to offer better grades to students with whom they’ve become friendly.

POLITE/IMPOLITE TOPICS/BEHAVIORS – Teachers generally do not proclaim their political position or try to influence their students in terms of politics. Politics can be an inappropriate topic in many public forums, since there are often sharp divisions between people on sociopolitical issues. However, among close friends, friendly arguments over politics aren’t uncommon. It’s not uncommon for adults to question each other about marital status, number of children, and birthplace, when first introduced.

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