



# RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE


## **M.Ed. In TESL Program Country Informational Reports**

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program  
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

Country: Colombia

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# Colombia

## A Glimpse into Education

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TESL 539

# Location

🇨🇴 Colombia is located in Northwest South America

🇨🇴 Borders Venezuela & Brazil to the east, Ecuador & Peru to the south, and Panama to the west

🇨🇴 26<sup>th</sup> largest nation in the world

🇨🇴 4<sup>th</sup> largest country in South America



# Colombia's Struggles

- 🇨🇴 Violent conflicts
- 🇨🇴 Drug trafficking – brings in \$6 billion/year
- 🇨🇴 Corruption (government, politics, education)
- 🇨🇴 According to SIPRI (el Instituto Internacional de Investigación Sobre Paz), the internal conflict in Colombia is among the 10 most bloody in the world.
- 🇨🇴 Student protests in 2009 regarding underfunding in education (Mejia, 2009)

# Language & Ethnicity

- 🇨🇴 Spanish is the national language
- 🇨🇴 English is spoken on the islands of San Andres and Providencia
- 🇨🇴 There are hundreds of indigenous Amerindian languages and dialects
- 🇨🇴 58% Mestizo (Amerindian & Spanish)
- 🇨🇴 20% White
- 🇨🇴 14% Mulatto
- 🇨🇴 4% African American
- 🇨🇴 4% Amerindian

(Flaitz, 2003)



# Literacy & Poverty

🇨🇴 93% adult literacy rate from 2005-2008

🇨🇴 98% youth literacy rate from 2004-2008 (15-24 years old)

🇨🇴 16% of the Colombian population is below the international poverty line of U.S.

🇨🇴 16% of Colombians are living on less than \$1.25/day 1994-2008

🇨🇴 Gross National Income per capita in 2007 U.S. \$7,400

Year of Study	Age Range	Grade	Level of	Core Areas
12	16-17	11	Upper Secondary	Philosophy Economic/Political Science + Elem. Ed.
11	15-16	10		
10	14-15	9	Lower Secondary	Same as Elem. Ed.
9	13-14	8		
8	12-13	7		
7	11-12	6		
6	10-11	5	Elementary	Humanities, Spanish & foreign language Math, social sciences, history, geography, politics, democracy Natural sciences & environmental ed. Artistic & cultural ed. Religion, Phys. Ed. Technology
5	9-10	4		
4	8-9	3		
3	7-8	2		
2	6-7	1		
1	5-6	Transition		
	4-5	Kindergarten	Preschool-optional	
	3-4	Pre-Kindergarten		

# School Life

- 🇨🇴 Public School allows male & female students, conservative dress, no shorts
- 🇨🇴 Private School allows only male students or only female students, uniforms are worn
- 🇨🇴 Classrooms are small, crowded, with little decoration
- 🇨🇴 Two academic calendars due to the varying climatic conditions in different parts of Colombia
  - A: End January- mid June with a break from June-July and finish in mid November (most of the country)
  - B: September- November with a break in January ending in June (Cauca, Narino, Putumayo, and Valle del Cauca)
  - Both sessions offer 198 days of school (Flaitz, 2003)



# Teaching & Learning

## Teaching

- 🚩 Teacher-centered
- 🚩 Lectures, notes, dictation
- 🚩 Strict, demanding, traditional
- 🚩 Discussion is limited
- 🚩 Teachers typically in front of room

## Students

- 🚩 Prefer to learn visually and kinesthetically
- 🚩 Expected to listen and stay quiet
- 🚩 No active participation

# Discipline & Respect

- 🇷🇺 Students are sent to a coordinator for not obeying rules, they sign a black book, or get a note or call home
- 🇷🇺 Disciplinary action is taken for talking back, fighting, smoking, and violating the dress code
- 🇷🇺 Grades are used to manipulate behavior
- 🇷🇺 Good teachers are thought to be friendly and respectful
- 🇷🇺 Students are typically good friends with their classmates
- 🇷🇺 Students typically travel in the same classes of students through many grades

# What **Not To Do** When Interacting

- 🇷🇺 Close proximity is OK when talking but do not touch
- 🇷🇺 Do not put feet on chairs or tables
- 🇷🇺 Do not yawn in public
- 🇷🇺 It is bad luck to put purse or book bag on the floor
- 🇷🇺 Do not use the symbol for “OK” and place over nose – refers to homosexuality



# Fitting In

- 🇨🇴 Legal, racial, and cultural obstacles are encountered in US – Stereotypes, Job and housing discrimination
- 🇨🇴 Many Colombians consider their stay in the US temporary and hold strong ties to Colombia
- 🇨🇴 Colombian Americans struggle daily with racial and economic discrimination and also with American culture, which many find alienating (Sturner, 2012)

# Views and Values

- 🇨🇴 Colombian Americans value education highly
- 🇨🇴 Move to the US to provide the opportunity for their children to be educated in high school and beyond
- 🇨🇴 Only wealthy Colombians have this privilege
- 🇨🇴 Colombians have strong religious beliefs which often overlap with education – religion is incorporated into daily education and many schools are managed by religious orders of the Roman Catholic Church



# Predominate areas of Colombians in US

1. Victory Gardens, NJ
2. Dover, NJ
3. Virginia Gardens, FL
4. Kendall West, FL
5. The Hammocks, FL
6. Central Falls, RI
7. Country Club, FL
8. Morristown, NJ
9. Montauk, NY
10. Broadview-Pompano Park, FL



# Resources

## Books

- Flaitz, J. (2003) *Understanding Your International Students An Educational, Cultural, and Linguistic Guide*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- (March 2010) *International Education Guide for the Assessment of Education from the Republic of Colombia*. Alberta: The Crown in the right of the Province of Alberta.

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# Resources

## Images

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