

# Parramos, Guatemala



*Lauren & Kevin Sanchez*

## Development & Growth

Growing up, my dad often preached to my brothers and me through quotes—many of them sports-related. What was one of his favorite sources? Michael Jordan. I can still hear him say, *“I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed,”* or, *“I have done my best work when I have least felt like it.”*

Looking back on our five years since opening Academy of Future Leaders (AFL), I realize just how much those words resonate with our journey.

There were many days I didn’t feel like showing up—whether it was teaching, hiring, training, firing, building curriculum, grading, or even celebrating milestones. The weight and responsibility of leadership sometimes felt crushing.

Our official launch was humbling. We signed a lease for the space, opened our doors, and had eight students—five of whom were family. I remember sitting there, six months pregnant, overwhelmed, sweating, and on the verge of tears. I panicked. How could we possibly pay rent and salaries? I feared we had made a terrible mistake—that all the hard work, prayer, and support from so many people had been wasted.

But in that moment, I remembered my dad’s voice, quoting MJ. And more importantly, we remembered God’s faithfulness. Kevin and I prayed for wisdom, strength, and direction. We committed that if our impact was meant to reach just eight students, we would give them the absolute best we had.

Fast forward five years—God has done more than we could have imagined.

Today, AFL serves over **175 students** with a dedicated team of **14 staff members**. Most of our new students come through recommendations and word-of-mouth—a testament to the impact we’re making. Our adult students often “graduate” early because their newfound bilingual skills help them secure stable jobs.

We recently added a jungle gym to keep up with the energy of our youngest learners.



Our new adult English class is nearly full, with 13 out of 15 spots taken. This November, we’ll celebrate our **first-ever graduating class**—six students who’ve completed the full five-year AFL curriculum.

I now go to work with joy, knowing we’re seeing the fruit of what once felt like an impossible dream. I’m beyond grateful—for your support, for this community, and for the reminder that failure is never final when you keep going.

Thank you for believing in us.



# Where Do We Go From Here - UF!

I am so proud of all that AFL has become. We are nearing financial sustainability, and we've witnessed incredible growth—especially within our staff, who we hope will eventually take full ownership of the project. Watching their development has been inspiring and has sparked new ideas for the future.



I never want to get so comfortable that I stop dreaming, growing, or striving to improve. And out of that desire, SEEDS was born. SEEDS is the Christian bilingual school we plan to launch in January. We'll begin with around 25 students in Pre-K and Kindergarten, adding one grade level each year. We've already been approved by the Ministry of Education to operate as an official educational institution, and we're now in the process of finalizing curriculum, hiring new teachers, designing uniforms, and submitting all necessary documents for full ministry approval. The name SEEDS was inspired by the parable in Matthew: "But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown" (Matthew 13:23).

That verse perfectly captures our heart for this school: to plant seeds of faith, knowledge, and leadership that will grow and multiply goodness in our community. SEEDS will be a safe, nurturing space where young leaders are raised up to carry positive change far beyond our classrooms.

Since purchasing our property last year, we've been dreaming big—not just about enhancing the educational experience, but also about transforming the facility itself.

To the right, you'll see a preliminary layout of what we hope the campus will look like in five to ten years. While we know the architectural plans will evolve, the vision remains clear and compelling.

Our long-term plans include: eight classrooms, new offices and bathrooms, a community-accessible pool-sized water filtration system, a turfed soccer field, a church and event space with a full kitchen, a playground and jungle gym area, a coffee shop, a teachers' lounge, a psychologist's office, and a tech/computer lab.

This is a major undertaking—but one we believe will significantly impact an underserved community by creating a beautiful, functional, and holistic space for learning, growth, and community-building.



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## Support

Thank you for your gifts and prayers. Reach us by email at [lauren.s@cimissions.org](mailto:lauren.s@cimissions.org)

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