

FUERZA HONDURAS

Newsletter - January 2020



We're excited to share that we had another successful year of the Fuerza para el Futuro youth leadership development program, with our highest number of student participants to date! This year, we continued our focus on nutrition and wellness education, and also spent time discussing topics related to sexual education and violence. The Fuerza Arriba worked closely with the core Fuerza students, helping to coach them as they prepared to present the content they learned to families across the Locomapa region. We also introduced our inaugural class of Fuerza Abajo, established at the request of a group of 10-12 year olds who didn't meet the minimum age requirement for the core Fuerza program but still felt energized to help their community. Keep reading to learn more about what our group of 60+ Fuerza students and 6 Dartmouth students/alumni accomplished during our week in El Rosario!



Fuerza Curriculum

Core Leadership Curriculum & Team Building

Fuerza is designed to empower young people and help them develop the skills and knowledge they need in order to become future leaders in their communities. Through activities and discussions, students practice skills such as communication, public speaking, critical thinking and problem solving.

This year, some of our activities focused directly on leadership and team building. One day, we played telephone to demonstrate active listening, and then talked about what worked and what didn't. Another day, we had students write about someone they considered a leader in their own lives, and share with the group. They wrote down characteristics or skills



Students compete in a trivia game of the week's knowledge.



Students present to the Chaguite community.

that they thought were important in a leader on sticky notes and we talked about how they themselves can become leaders in El Rosario. We spent plenty of time playing games and running around with the kids, too! (They can't get enough of ninja!)

In addition to focusing on leadership directly, the fuerza curriculum focuses on a different topic or set of topics each year. This year, we tackled nutrition as well as sex education and consent. Once students had a chance to learn, we traveled to the local communities of Chaguite and Carrizalito where Fuerza students gave presentations and performed skits demonstrating what they'd learned. We were incredibly impressed—they shared important information with their friends, family, and the broader community, while also taking initiative and practicing their public speaking skills.

Sex Ed/Violence Prevention

A portion of this year's curriculum focused on sex education and violence prevention. This can be somewhat of a touchy subject in Honduras, so we started by meeting with the Health and Development Committee to ask permission to teach sex education and what they thought would be beneficial for the students to learn. In the classroom, the discussion began with a skit by Fuerza Ariba about safe sexual practices and the importance of visiting doctors for care and advice. The Dartmouth students then presented information about the anatomical process of getting pregnant, sexually transmitted infections and the different contraceptive choices available for safe sex practices in Honduras (condoms, hormone pills, hormone injections, and IUDs). Shawn, Juliana and Rhea acted out skits throughout the presentation to keep the kids interested and to emphasize the points.



Student present in the surrounding villages.

For a lot of the students this was new information. We worked to dispel myths, such as the idea that women can only using contraceptives after marriage, and began the work of normalizing discussions around sex so that students can speak openly with their partners and family. The Fuerza students were then split into small groups to create their own skits about the content they had learned.



Students preparing presentations.

After the skits, the boys and girls were separated for facilitated group discussions about consent and self-advocacy. We gave the students time to anonymously write questions they might have about the material covered. Some great questions came from this activity that reflected that they had been attentive during the sessions and understood the importance of the

material covered. It is our hope that the students will apply the curriculum information to their relationships and one day be open to similar discussions with their own children to pass on information about safe sex practices and consent.

Nutrition & Exercise

We revisited the topic of nutrition this year. Students began by journaling a list of the foods they might eat on a typical day, and we worked as a group to correctly sort the foods into four categories: proteins, carbohydrates, fruits/veggies, and junk foods. We made sure to emphasize the benefits of a balanced diet, discussing how protein contributes to muscle growth with proper exercise, carbohydrates give the body energy, fruits and vegetables provide micronutrients necessary to sustain everything from our eyes to our bones, and how junk foods should be consumed in moderation.

The Fuerza was then prepared to run through a “family grocery shopping” activity, an opportunity to discuss budgeting and saving as well as nutrition. We allocated a sum of 1,500 *lempiras* to each of four groups of students and asked them to create a grocery list, complete with a sufficient quantity of food to sustain a family of four for an entire month. They could spend all the money, or choose to set some aside as savings. In the end, each group was successfully strategic! They purchased a wide variety of healthy foods, limited their junk food consumption, and managed to leave some money in the bank to cover medical expenses from some surprise hypothetical catastrophes.



Students embark on a hike for a healthy dose of exercise!

Nothing complements a healthy diet better than regular exercise! We presented the benefits of exercising, including muscle growth, increased mental resilience, happier moods, better sleep, and reduced risk of disease. The Fuerza then experimented with various strength-training circuits, a yoga routine, and soccer games throughout the week. Students enjoyed the exercise so much that, during transitions between activities, we found them chanting, “ej-er-ci-cio! ej-er-ci-cio! ej-er-ci-cio!”

To complete this unit of curriculum, we touched on the importance of hydration. Drinking enough water keeps joints lubricated, prevents diseases, increases sleep quality, and more. We recommended that students drink about half a gallon of water each day.

Construction Project

This year Matt Garton '12 lead the Fuerza in building ten new tables for the education center in El Rosario. In addition to providing the center with tables that will be strong enough to last for many years, we wanted to build off last year's theme of emphasizing an organized manufacturing process and teaching skills that are valuable for *maquila* (factory) jobs, viable alternatives to often unstable farm work. To that end, we assigned Fuerza students small teams, each supervised by two or three leaders from Fuerza Arriba, who were empowered to teach, oversee, and quality check their team's progress daily.



Construction got off to a great start, with everyone excited to join in!



Teams working together to build their tables.

Fuerza students learned proper techniques for woodworking, including drilling pocket holes, applying wood glue, and using a combination of sandpaper, wood planers, and varnish to give each table a polished, aesthetic finish. Construction progressed in defined stages, with specific milestones to reach every day. Inventory management, safety, and quality control were emphasized at each stage, with each team's Fuerza Arriba leaders responsible for signing off on the completion and quality of each day's milestones.



Each team completed two tables, and at the end of the week, one table was selected and presented at graduation, based on the quality of the table and the teamwork displayed throughout the project. Deciding on a winner may have been the most challenging aspect of the project, as all of the tables were outstanding in their strength, stability, and appearance. This was an ambitious project with a tight schedule, and it was truly inspiring to see how everyone came together, overcame obstacles that arose, and put in tremendous dedication to complete the tables by the end of the week.



The completed tables lined up for one last inspection.



Unveiling the winning table at graduation.



Congratulations team Alcones - Your hard work really paid off!

Fuerza Arriba

Twelve Fuerza Arriba students participated this year, half of whom have participated in the Arriba program in previous years, with the other half joining as new graduates from the core Fuerza program. These older students, ranging in age from 17-25, planned curriculum for the core program. They were assigned small groups of Fuerza



students and worked with them to create presentations on the topics they had learned that week. As teachers and coaches of the younger students, each group created excellent educational skits, posters, and presentations. When we traveled to neighboring villages, the Arriba took charge to gather and organize audiences for the presentation.

The next step for the Fuerza Arriba is to proactively volunteer in El Rosario throughout the year. We spent time discussing their role as future leaders in the community and the duty they have to take the initiative to mobilize and teach younger students. Of their own accord, they arrived in full force to assist at a medical workshop the following week.



Fuerza Arriba students volunteering at a medical workshop in El Rosario.

Fuerza Abajo

For the first time, we expanded the Fuerza to include a small group of pre-teens (ages 9-12). This group approached the local Health and Development Committee and asked to be involved in this year's Fuerza program, even though they did not meet the minimum age requirement of 12 years. How could we say no! The kids had an incredible time playing games and participating in educational activities. They learned about nutrition, hydration, leadership, construction, and much more. While the older kids learned about sex education, the Fuerza Abajo group listened to a lesson on respecting one another in all situations and then created a series of fun skits on the topic. Each of these young students were an excellent contribution to the program, from the relentless energy in sanding the tables to the immense positivity they brought to every activity. We're excited to see them next year!



Jeremy Hadfield '21 and Fuerza Abajo students on their way to the "campo" to play field games.

Looking Ahead

As we conclude 2019, we look forward to Fuerza 2020. In the coming months we turn toward recruitment, to ensure a dedicated group of leaders will run Fuerza in 2020 and beyond. For four of our 2019 team members, this was their first time working with the El Rosario community. They brought new ideas and energy to the trip and we hope many will return next year. We hope to find other students similarly dedicated to education and stewardship to add to next year's team. We will also prepare for next year through fundraising for travel and materials. Thank you to all of you who have supported our work over the years, and thank you in advance to all who will continue to do so in 2020!

As we develop next year's curriculum and programming, we will continue to be in touch. In the meantime, don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or if you'd like to get involved.

Best wishes from the 2019 Fuerza Team!



*We enjoy a hike overlooking El Rosario with members of Fuerza Arriba.
Pictured here, the 2019 Fuerza team.
From left to right: Jeremy Hadfield D'21, Rhea Enzian D'21, Matt Garton D'12,
Abby Mihaly D'21, Jules Ortego D'13/GSB'19 Shawn Honaryar D'20.*