

## Chapter 4: Children and Schools

An increasing number of expatriate families move to Bali each year. Some of these families have already secured employment – generally in the tourist or education fields. For them, relocating to Bali is relatively easy; they will usually be offered housing and schooling as part of their expat package. Their main questions tend to be about their new neighborhood, their new school, medical issues, and shopping.

However, an increasing number of expat families are moving to Bali without the benefits of having a job waiting for them. Quite often these families are coming for a period from a few months to a year or two in order to try out the waters for future permanent relocation.

Families with children have some very real concerns about moving to Bali, especially if they have limited experience on the island. Issues about health are always of concern to parents. You can find information about this in the section on medical issues.

A second issue that concerns expats, especially those coming to Bali for a job assignment, is how their child will fit in – friends, schools, language and other areas of adjustment. Children who live in another culture for an extended period are commonly known as Third Culture Kids.

### Third Culture Kids

Third culture kids (also known as TCKs) are children who have spent a significant part of their childhood in another culture. They create a synthesis of their home culture (sometimes just the culture of their parents as they may not have spent much time “home”) and the culture that they are living in, and thus come up with a third culture. Third culture kids are known for being more comfortable with others like them than they are with children in either their home country or the country that they live in.

Ruth Hill Unseem coined the term TCK while she was doing fieldwork in India with her children. There are a variety of types of TCKs: military brats; children of missionaries, diplomats and business people; and children of international teachers. There are [websites](#) dedicated to TCKs.

TCKs have a number of characteristics. A few of them are:

- They are highly mobile
- They are politically aware
- They speak more than one language
- They make friends easily
- They tend to become expatriates themselves when they become adults
- They tend to be highly educated
- They tend to be less prejudiced than non-TCKs

But living an expatriate life as a child has some downsides as well. TCKs tend to:

- Have difficulties with commitment
- Have to work on their sense of who they are
- Feel different from others
- Have issues with feelings of powerlessness
- Have feelings of rootlessness and restlessness

If you raise your children in Bali, they will become TCKs. Is that a bad thing? No, I don't think so if you balance out the positives and negatives. I know a number of young adults who have been TCKs and without exception they are all mature, worldly, and highly responsible. The role of

parents with these children is to discuss their life in a different culture and help them along with the inevitable difficulties that they will face along the way.

Parents with small children are often concerned about their children having playmates. Finding Indonesian playmates is very easy, the kids just need to go outside and they'll have more playmates than they'll need. Expat children are especially popular because of their exoticness. Some Indonesian parents want their children to have expat children to play with because they want them to develop their English language skills.

If you live in one of the areas popular with expats, this is not much of a problem. There are organized playgroups in some areas, and generally expats link up through the usual networking that you find anywhere in the world where there are large numbers of expats.

For expatriate families who are moving permanently or for a long period of time, schooling is probably the major issue. There are a number of options for continuing your child's education. These are: 1) international schools; 2) national plus schools; 3) national schools; 4) tutoring; 5) home schooling.

Once, not all that long ago (OK, it has been close to two decades now), there was only one school in Bali serving the expat community – Bali International School. Now there are a variety of choices. The diversity of educational options came about partly because some parents were concerned that their children were not being prepared for re-entry into their home country; partly it was because as the expat community grew and spread out around the south (you'll note that almost all of the schools serving expats are located in the southern expat ghetto), issues arose about travel time to and from school; partly it was because of philosophical differences with the schools that existed at the time. Because of all of these factors, there are now a number of options for parents based on educational philosophy, geographical location, availability of financial resources, and issues relating to home country repatriation.

Fees generally range from around \$3000 - \$8,000 per year per child. This certainly isn't inexpensive, but if parents want their children to have an international class education, they need to pay for it. This is especially true overseas because of the cost of teachers. Even if teachers are paid what I consider a very minimal \$2000 per month, if you have eight teachers, the school already has an annual budget of



approximately \$160,000. Then there are expenses for teaching materials, technology, building maintenance, government fees, insurance, and more. I've run an international school before and it is not cheap. Years ago I was asked about starting up an international school in Bali; when I gave the

parents an estimate on first year costs, they couldn't believe it. They thought that they could get away with paying teachers \$500 a month, but you generally get what you pay for, and if you want a good school with an outstanding staff, you need to offer them more incentives than just living on the island of Bali. They can go to most international schools around Asia and make \$3,000 a month easily if they have experience. Well, enough on that. Here is the most recent list of schools serving the expat community in Bali:

[Bali International School](#) is the oldest international school on the island and has a generally excellent reputation, although it has developed its detractors over the years as other schools have sprung up around the island. The school recently changed directors once again. By my count they have had three in the last seven years, which isn't a good sign.

At the time that I'm writing this, the school has a new website, and while I like the rather minimalist design, the information, unfortunately is rather minimal as well. Two examples are the lack of information on the curriculum page as well as the lack of information on the employment page.

The school was established in 1986 and is a non-profit, non-denominational school. It covers students from Preschool to Grade 12. BIS is an IBO World School, which means that it has the PYP, MYP, and IB programs. BIS is accredited by WASC.

BIS is located on a large campus in Sanur just off the By-Pass. It has a 25 meter swimming pool, a multipurpose covered sports area, IT labs, a music with individual studios, science labs, air conditioned classrooms, a multipurpose hall where assemblies and productions are held and a library with over 36,000 books.

Classes are taught by certified teachers from a variety of countries. Contact the school for more information on employment opportunities.

[Australian International School](#) has a curriculum designed especially for Australian students. AIS has four schools located in Indonesia: two in Java, one in Kalimantan, and one in Bali. AIS Bali serves children from pre-school through Grade 12. The primary curriculum is based on Victoria standards, and the secondary curriculum is based on the Australian Capital Territories curriculum. The school's main goals are to provide a global education and prepare students for university education.

AIS focuses on instilling a desire for academic excellence along with creating a strong school-home relationship. Students are expected to work collaboratively and develop their academic and personal qualities.

AIS works on mainstreaming students who have learning difficulties or disabilities, but is also able to provide specialist support. This is a key area for some parents who have children with a disability that requires that they have extra support. In many small schools, it is not possible to provide this kind of specialist support. The fact that AIS does provide this assistance sets it apart from many other expat-oriented schools in Bali.

AIS is located in Krobokan on a secure campus (unfortunately important these days) with purpose-built facilities in Balinese style. For those of you who are not familiar with educational jargon, a purpose-built facility means that AIS was designed to be a school. Many small schools are located in old homes or other structures which are modified in one way or another for use as a school. There are around 150 students on campus, so while this is not a tiny school, it is still fairly small.

The facilities at the school include: a computer lab, a special room for art and music, a library, playgrounds, a café, and a multi-purpose court used for a variety of athletic activities.

From Kindergarten through Grade 6, the curriculum is integrated and uses an inquiry-based approach. While there are “core” subjects that receive special emphasis such as math, English, science and social studies, other subjects such as Indonesian language, PE, art, music and technology are also emphasized.

From years 7-10, the core subjects are math, English, social studies, science, technology, the arts, PE, and Indonesian. In the last two years of study at AIS, students have a variety of electives to choose from in addition to continuing to study the core courses. Upon completion of the final two years at AIS, students are fully accredited to enter university in Australia or elsewhere around the world.

AIS considers IT to be an important part of their program. Students in the younger grades focus on the learning the basics and see how technology can be used to solve real problems. Higher level students study design issues for websites as well as for designing games and multimedia applications.

Like all good international schools, AIS offers a variety of extra-curricular activities that include arts and athletics. Some of these are: chess club, cricket, photography, badminton, baseball, soccer, softball, volleyball, etc. Let's not forget that famous Aussie sport – netball. I love watching netball.

[Canggu Community School](#) is a non-profit private school serving both the international and local communities in the South Bali area; it uses the British National Curriculum and employs certified foreign teachers. CCS was established in 2001. There are over 300 students enrolled at the school in grades Pre-school to Year 8. CCS has a secure, purpose-built facility on a hectare of land. This school is located out in the boondocks of Canggu and if you are living in the Kuta/Legian/Seminyak area, it will take 15-30 minutes to get to school depending on the traffic.

CCS was built with Australian standards in mind; classrooms are 850 square feet and are quite bright. Each classroom has air-conditioning that the teacher uses at his/her discretion as the buildings are insulated against heat and humidity. The school has an IT lab with one computer per student. All computers have internet access, and CCS sees IT as an important part of a student's education. Additionally, CCS has a science lab, a music room, a library, and a multi-function Hall that they use for PE.

Parents who wish to enroll their child in school, need to make an appointment and should bring their child with them. Expats who wish to enroll their child before they arrive in Bali can contact the school and fill out an e-application. Canggu has a waiting list at all grade levels, and priority is given to siblings of current students. CCS is

Children are enrolled in a grade based on their age as of August 1. The school website has a very informative placement schedule which shows equivalent grades in other national systems compared to the CCS placement system. And just a note for that small group of parents who have “gifted” children who just have to be placed in a higher grade than their age dictates, the school website specifically says that higher placements will not be done. The school has set a maximum limit of 22 students in Year 4 and below, and 24 students in Year 5 and above. This is a fairly large classroom size for international schools. Generally international schools limit classroom size to 18 if at all possible.

CCS is not one of the cheapest schools in Bali. It is interesting that on their very nicely presented

website, their fee information is two years old which makes me wonder if it has been increased since then. However, based on the 2006-2007 academic year, the cost for a Pre-school student is \$3,300 per year; \$5,000 per year for students in Grades 1-6; and \$6,000 for students in Year 7. They also have a late fee of 5%, but also have discounts for families with more than one child: 5% for a second child, 10% for a third child, and 15% for a fourth child.

In addition to the tuition, there is an annual building fee of \$250 for Pre-school students, and \$500 for Grades 1-7. New students pay a one-time registration fee of \$300 for Pre-school, and \$600 for other students.

The school website has an excellent Pupil-Parent Handbook in pdf format. If you are interested in this school either for your child or as a possible place of employment, I suggest that you download it.

### **Employment for Teachers**

Prospective teachers are required to have a teaching credential, excellent language and writing skills, a commitment to professional development, and an understanding of the use of ICT across the curriculum. It is advantageous for the prospective teacher to have updated first-aid qualifications, and training in ESL.

While the curriculum is based on the British National Curriculum, it has been adapted for international use. Students in Years 2-6 take the SATs. Other assessment is school-based. CCS has an after school activities programs and teachers are required to sponsor one activity per week.

The school has a number of specialist teachers on staff. They are currently in an expansion mode so they are expanding their staff. You can find out about available positions on the school website.

Teacher contracts are generally given for a two-year period. Salaries are based on a teacher's qualifications and experience and thus are not listed on the school website. Benefits include: assistance with airfare and relocation, housing allowance, medical insurance, and a long-term bonus that is paid after four years of service at the school. Applications should be emailed to the school. An application should include: full name, date of birth, residential address, contact details, professional experience, educational background, professional development, and the name of three referees. Interviews are done in Bali or London. If it is not possible to have a face-to-face interview, a telephone interview or video conference is possible.

[Doremi School](#) is a small school located in the Renon area of Denpasar. It serves both Indonesian and foreign children. It has a Preschool, Primary school and Secondary school. The school uses a mixed curriculum from Singapore and the United States. Doremi also uses the Indonesian curriculum in the Primary and Secondary schools. Doremi has a wide variety of facilities including a pool, a computer lab, sports fields, air-conditioned classrooms, a science lab, and a library. The website has a list of school fees so the cost is very transparent; plan on paying around Rp. 1,000,000 per month.

[Sunrise School](#) is another school in Bali that it is located in Kerobokan in the south of Bali. Sunrise was founded in 2000, and uses the British National Curriculum. Unlike many of the more traditional international schools in Bali, Sunrise talks a lot on its website about holistic education. The school's motto is think globally, act locally, feel totally. OK.

The school currently has around 95 students from Playgroup (age 3 through Grade 7 (age 12). The school's philosophy leads it to emphasize the interconnectedness of everything. As it says, it

endeavors to get students to “understand the cosmos is a whole, a unity, and a fantastically complex system of relationships.” Additionally, it notes that “any information that is destructive to humanity is unnatural and not valuable. Good knowledge must defend culture and humanity.”

The school obviously has thought out its principles and has organized the school around these principles. This school is for students who have parents whose belief system is in line with the schools. They probably don't serve McDonalds here for lunch.

Sunrise school does give achievement tests to its students from Grades 3 and up in reading and math. Sunrise participates in sports competitions with other national plus and international schools in Bali.

Admission to Sunrise School is based on whether or not the school principal and teachers feel that a student will benefit academically, socially, personally and emotionally from being a student at Sunrise. Students will only be admitted provisionally until complete records from previous schools are on file at Sunrise.

There are three major groups of fees at Sunrise: Development Fee, Resource Fee and Tuition Fees. The total annual costs run from \$2,770 for Playgroups students to \$5,530 for Secondary students. Other fees include luncheon, sports trips and excursions. The costs of these fees are variable. Fees may be paid by the term or annually. Late payments will result in a fine. There is a 5% discount for parents with more than one child in the school.

[Green School](#) will be opening in Bali in September 2008. Take a look at the school website – it has a lovely design and is filled with information about the school. Green School is influenced by the Steiner-Waldorf educational paradigm. Waldorf is an integrated approach to education that emphasizes interdisciplinary learning and focuses on developing the whole child. In other words, this is holistic education.

The school is located on an eight-hectare campus along the Ayung River in Sibang Kaja about 15 minutes north of Denpasar and 20 minutes southwest of Ubud. Facilities at the school include: a gym, sports field, classrooms, libraries and labs along with a variety of environmental and entrepreneurial projects. Green School will be offering boarding facilities beginning in Fall 2009.

The school uses an integrated curriculum that combines academic content with a hands-on approach that allows students to apply what they learn in school to real life situations such as environmental and entrepreneurial projects.

The Steiner-influenced approach is combined with an IB framework. The curriculum is based on the content, goals and assessments of the New South Wales school system in Australia. Assessment will take a variety of forms including the use of standardized tests. Major content areas are math, science, language arts, social studies, a foreign language, arts and technology. All of this will be taught within the IB framework. While many areas of the curriculum, some content areas such as math will be taught as discrete subjects as well as being integrated into the themes approach that IB is known for. The school website says that they plan on having an education to prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Green School is seeking recognition from IBO and accreditation from the Council of International Schools (CIS). A sample curriculum is online for easy downloading.

Green School will serve students from Preschool through Grade 8 this year. Additional grades may be added next year. Application forms are online. The fees are fairly hefty. They run from a \$250

building fee and \$1450 tuition for Preschool students to an \$850 building fee and \$8950 tuition for students from years 7-10.

Plans are to have class sizes of 16-18 with one western-trained teacher and one Indonesian-trained teacher in each classroom as well as a teaching assistant.

The school does employ international teachers and has a section on its website for teachers seeking employment. Prospective teachers can send a cover letter and a resume to the school. Green School is looking for teachers with 3-5 years of experience and IB or Steiner/Waldorf experience.

[Pelangi Learning Center](#) is a non-profit bilingual school located in Ubud. It opened in 2006 and has more than 30 children in classes from Playgroup through Grade 3. The school has plans to add additional grades each year. It provides a holistic, multi-cultural child-centered education. It has students that are mixed Indonesian-international, expatriate, and local Balinese. The school uses both international and Indonesian teachers. The curriculum is a mix of the Indonesian national curriculum and the American Creative Curriculum for Preschool. The EC program is bilingual and children are taught in Indonesian and English. the website is out of date and should be updated soon for potential expat admissions.

[Sanur Independent School](#), is a co-educational, multi-national school, offering education to children from Kindergarten age through to Year 7. The school offers a western-style education in the English language to both expatriate and Indonesian students. SIS was founded in 1996 to meet the growing demand for schools for expat children. Teaching is done in English and children need to have a basic grasp of English to enter SIS as they do not have the resources for teaching ESL students.

A Board of Directors, the Principal, and a representative of the yayasan run the school. While parents do have input, decisions ultimately rest with the school leadership. SIS does have a parent organization that assists the school in fundraising and organizing social events.

The school day runs from 9:00 am until 3:00. Children eat lunch at school and may order lunch from an outside caterer. Bus service is available for students living in Sanur, Nusa Dua, and Seminyak. Students pay a fee for this service at the beginning of each term.

Reports are given twice a year in December and June. An open house is held during the third week of each school year to inform parents of the teachers' programs and the school routines. Parent-teacher conferences are held in January each year. In other words, SIS is very traditional in its organization.

As with many schools serving the expat and Indonesian communities, the curriculum at Sanur Independent School is a mixture of curricula from England, Australia, America and Indonesia. Schools with expat populations work with a combined curriculum so that students are easier able to make the transition back to their home countries at the end of their stay in Bali. It should be noted that the school does not teach the Indonesian National Curriculum. This can be a handicap for Indonesian students who expect to enter the Indonesian education system at a later point in their life, as they are required to take national exams in years six and nine.

There are eight key learning areas at SIS. These are: math, English, health and PE, foreign language, science, social studies, technology and the arts. The school employs specialist teachers for technology, sports, art and music. The school has an extensive website but no information on employment opportunities.

SIS works to develop each child as an individual and help them reach their full potential. The

school emphasizes the right of students to an education while having fun and yet maintaining a sense of discipline and respect for their teachers.

Sanur Independent School charges an initial \$450 registration fee along with a \$350 capital levy. Tuition fees are \$775 per term or \$3,100 per year. Late fees are assessed and there is a 5% discount for paying for the school year in advance.

I've never been to this school, but I've had several reports from parents who are very pleased with the education provided at SIS.

[Sekolah Dyatmika](#) , is an independent, bilingual national plus school with both Indonesian and expatriate faculty. It is located in Sanur, Bali. It uses an Indonesian curriculum and University of Cambridge International Examinations curricula. These are taught using international teaching methodologies. The school serves students from Preschool through Grade 12. There are about 300 students currently studying at Dyatmika. Class sizes are relatively high for international standards with 24 students per class in the upper grades to 20 per class in the early childhood classes.

Sekolah Dyatmika hires international teachers, and they have a career section on their website. They are currently not seeking teachers.

The guiding principles of the school are:

- *moral integrity,*
- *religious and social tolerance,*
- *intellectual capacity,*
- *broad knowledge,*
- *civic responsibility,*
- *cultural preservation, and*
- *sensible management of the natural environment*

Facilities at the school include a sports area, library, music room, two computer labs, two science labs and, of course, classrooms. The school sponsors extra-curricular activities as well as community projects such as the annual clean-up day.

Senior students are prepared to pass both the Indonesian national exams as well the University of Cambridge International Examinations.

No information is given on the website regarding admissions other than a contact address. Hmm, what does that mean about tuition costs?

[Lollypop Preschool](#) is the Bali incarnation of this chain of preschools found around Indonesia. Classes are for students from ages 1.5 to 6. Tuition is not listed on the school website. Lollypop is located in Denpasar. Facilities include: swimming pool, computer room, music room, clinic, gym and outdoor/indoor recreation areas. The website is out of date. Academically these little tykes study reading, music, math, language arts, Indonesian, Mandarin, character building, computers, and more. Sounds like a like for these little guys.

[Asian International School](#) is located in Denpasar by Udayana University. The school occupies a 20,000 square meter complex. It has two academic blocks with classrooms, libraries and labs. All classrooms are air-conditioned. The school also has a cafeteria and multi-purpose sports complex in addition to recreation areas for the little once. There is a health clinic staffed with two qualified doctors and nurses.

AIS uses the Cambridge Primary Programme, IGCSE (O-level) and A/AS levels. They follow the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi in running the school with an emphasis on community service and non-violence. The website talks about the teacher being a guide rather than a final authority. Each classroom is created to fit the needs of each child.

AIS has three principles of “True Teaching.” These are:

1. Nothing can be taught.
2. The mind has to be consulted on its own growth.
3. Work from near to far, from that which is to that which will be

The school accepts both expatriate and Indonesian students from the ages of two through Grade 12. No information on the website is given regarding tuition.

AIS does hire international teachers although they have no specific hiring information on their website. You can find out more about this by email the school.

## **Homeschooling**

Homeschooling is definitely an option for the expatriate, but it has a number of drawbacks as well as positives. Let's take a look at some of these.

Materials are difficult to come by in Bali and will need to be bought back home for the most part. Singapore has excellent educational materials in the large bookstores. You can purchase most of what you will need during a visa run or a family vacation.

A lot of schooling is the social interaction. Home schooling by its very nature restricts that interaction. You might have control over what your child learns, but they will miss out on what I consider to be one of the main aspects of school.

There are many websites and forums devoted to the home schooling community. Check them out and see how they can help you. Do some networking with other homeschoolers in Bali; you can share resources, especially if you're in the same area. You can also look for online schools and download curriculum from many of the international schools around the world as well as the national curricula from your home country.

An offshoot of homeschooling is taking courses online from an accredited institution. I know a few students that have taken this route and their parents fill in the gaps and act in an advisory role. You can find online classes easily on the internet.

## **National Plus Schools**

Over the past ten years, a private school system known as National Plus schools has developed in Indonesia. Bali now has a number of National Plus schools. These schools use a curriculum that mixes national and international elements. National Plus schools usually use English as one of the main teaching languages and often have at least a few expat teachers on the staff. Tuition for National Plus schools is lower than international schools but still fairly high if you are living on a fixed budget.

## **Tutoring**

Some parents decide not to enroll their children in school and yet are uncomfortable with

Homeschooling. This leaves them with the option of tutoring – essentially private individual lessons. Generally tutoring involves the tutor (usually someone with teaching experience) coming to the student's home for a set period of time and teaching them an agreed upon curriculum. I know of only a few parents who have taken this approach, and they were short-term visitors. The main problem with tutoring is hiring a tutor who does not have a work permit. This makes both the employer and the employee guilty of breaking the immigration laws. If you want to use this option, proceed with great care.

## **Local Schools**

For families who cannot afford the cost of an international or National Plus school, it is possible to send children to the local schools, but teaching is in Indonesian, and the facilities are generally of low quality. There will be three choices of local schools – the government schools, private schools and religious schools (usually Catholic). While it seems logical that a private school would be of higher quality than a public school, this is not necessarily the case. Ask your neighbors about the schools if you plan on sending your child to a local school. My children attend a private school in Singaraja which costs more than the government school. It has fairly good facilities and actually the educational quality is better at the higher grades than at the lower ones. If you are intending to repatriate at some stage, you might not want to send your child to a local school although the curriculum in many content areas is quite similar to the curriculum that you would find in many international schools. The main difference will be in the teaching methodologies employed by the teachers. To give you an idea of some of the difference, read this article that I wrote a few months ago for expat website on Indonesia.

## **What I'd Teach the Teachers**

International teachers who teach in a developing country generally teach at the best schools that the country has to offer. Quite often national students are not allowed to attend those schools, or the tuition is too high for them to afford. In many developing countries, there are a variety of choices for national students: government schools, private schools (either religious or non-sectarian), and international schools. From my experience, the average national school in developing countries is on par with the worst of our schools in the United States. There are many reasons for this - money (for facilities, resources, training and salaries) being the main one.

It's heartening to see so many international schools develop community projects that revolve around helping the local schools. But, like international aid projects, those kinds of programs can only do so much. Developing countries need to develop and fund their education systems, and the rich and powerful need to be leading that fight. When rich Indonesians or Indians or Pakistanis can put their kids in private schools, they have little incentive to improve the national education system.

I'll be honest about this. My wife and I became more involved with the local schools when our own children left the international school system and entered the national school system. It's time that the movers and shakers got moving and shaking on improving Indonesian schools. What follows are some of my thoughts on Indonesian education, starting with what I know best - teachers.

Let me start off with a little background. First, I started teaching 32 years ago, and I've taught students from ages 3 to age 60. What's that mean? I've either been fairly good at what I do, or I've been lucky, or I'm an expert at CYA. Most probably a bit of all three. Second, I have a lot of respect for many of the Indonesian teachers that I've met – they work for peanuts in crumbling schools with

few resources and little parent support (not to blame the parents either as most of the ones that I know are occupied with trying to scratch out a living and provide as best they can for their children). My wife and I give as much support to the schools as possible, but here are a few things that I'd like to teach the teachers.

- Don't teach to the test
- Students will respond to interesting lessons
- Long fingernails may be personally irritating, but they don't have much to do with education.
- Use your time wisely.
- Individualized education is a possibility.
- Listen to what students have to say, you might be surprised at what you hear.
- Professional development, professional development, professional development.
- Parents are Partners – include them in the education of their child
- Organize and develop a real teachers' organization.

### **Don't Teach to the Test**

This isn't just for Indonesian teachers, although the amount of time that my children spend cramming for the national exams is outrageous and takes away precious time that could be used for some real learning, i.e. that is developing knowledge and understanding, not memorizing facts and figures. Barack Obama said something very interesting recently in a speech in Virginia when he was discussing education. He said that the US needs to expect excellence from our students, but that we need to stop teaching to the test. High stakes testing is found everywhere these days; it's time that we all realize that doing well on a test is not the same as education. Take a look at the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy movement. It's where we need to go.

### **Students will respond to interesting lessons**

Reading from the book (when students have them) and parroting back answers is boring. It's boring for the students and boring for the teachers. Bring in outside resources, get the students to do the presenting, break them up into groups and have a debate, let your personality come through in your lessons. One of the things I almost never hear an Indonesian student say about their teacher is that he/she is interesting or cool or fun. Education shouldn't be a drag.

### **Long Fingernails and Hair**

I don't know how many times I've watched a child run back in the house because they just figured out that they might get punished by the teacher for having fingernails that are too long or hair that needs a trim. I thought the hair thing went out in the 70s. Take a look at the hair on kids on TV; quite a number of the cool ones are a bit shaggy. Shaggy might be cool. I can't quite figure out why my kids are more concerned with the length of their hair and nails than with their homework.

### **Use your time wisely**

The school day for most Indonesian children is short enough as it is – my son in 6<sup>th</sup> grade does a period a day less than my students do. That's ok if you use all of the time for teaching, but what about all the days that kids spend hanging out doing basically nothing around exam times, and the days spent sweeping the school? The schools should have a sufficient janitorial staff to take care of these duties. Provide some jobs for the folks that need them.

## **Individualized education is a possibility**

We can individualize our teaching. I watched an Indonesian teacher at a “good” school spent forty-five minutes on a lesson that most kids had figured out in 15 minutes because a few kids didn’t get it. One size fits all only in cheap nightgowns. Students learn and work at their own pace; we can keep them engaged if we give them lessons that challenge them. A class that is always all on the same page may look good to someone, but it most likely won’t be to the students.

## **Listen to what students have to say**

Students have a lot to say about a lot of things. They think, they question, they want to understand how the world works and that means that they have to work at it. They’ll get more from telling you about a concept or an issue or what algorithm works best for them, than they will from you telling them about it. What ideas and backgrounds and mindsets are they bringing to class? That’s where we need to start. It’s old hat now in Western education to say that teachers should be guides rather than the final authority, and most of us have gotten that (well, I hope so). According to Edgar Dale’s book, *Audio-Visual Methods in Technology*: "After 2 weeks we tend to remember 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, 50% of what we hear and see, 70% of what we say [and] 90% of what we both say and do." It’s time this lesson reached Indonesia.

## **Professional Development**

I can’t stress enough how much good PD has done for my teaching and my understanding of what it is that I do everyday. And there’s still so much to learn. Read about your subject, think about it, talk about it, discuss it with your colleagues. Push for PD. See below for more.

## **Parents are Partners**

As a teacher, I know that some parents can be irritating, rude, and difficult to deal with, but the overwhelming majority want what’s best for their children, and they will support a communicative teacher with all their resources. Let them know what the homework is, give them regular updates on how their children are doing, create a school or class newsletter. Have an open house night for parents to see what’s going on in the classroom. Get them to provide extra resources if they have them. Children will be more responsible for their education if they know that there is regular communication between school and home.

## **Organize**

Teachers need to be paid more, they need professional resources, they need professional development, they need modern technology in the classrooms. They won’t be given all this by bureaucrats and politicians. They have to demand it, and they need to do it with their students and their parents as partners. It’s time that the government takes education seriously and realizes that by shortchanging children today, they’re shortchanging the country tomorrow.