

El Salvador

EL SALVADOR *Upclose*

Capital: San Salvador

Population: 6,822,378 (June 2006)

Size: 21,040 sq. km. (8,124 sq. mi.)
(slightly smaller than Massachusetts)

Location: in Central America between Guatemala to the northwest and Honduras to the northeast and bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the west

Climate: tropical on the coast with rainy season from May to October and dry season from November to April, but temperate in higher regions

Terrain: mountainous with narrow coastal region and central plains

Monetary Unit: U.S. dollar

Religion: 83% Roman Catholic, with a presence of nearly 1 million Protestant evangelicals

Language(s): Spanish, Nahua (an Amerindian language)

Literacy Rate: total population 80.2%; men 82.8%; women 77.7% (2003)

Ethnicity: mestizo (mixed Amerindian-Spanish or assimilated Amerindian) 90%, Amerindian 1%, white 9%

Per Capita Income: US\$1,943 (2006)

Population Distribution: 60% urban, 40% rural (2003)

Population below Poverty Line: 36.1% (2004)

Life Expectancy: total population 70.92 years; men 67.31 years; women 74.7 years (2006)

Government: republic



PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

January 1	New Year's Day
week before Easter*	Holy Week
May 1	Labor Day
June 22	Teachers' Day
August 3, 4, 5, 6	<i>Semana de Agosto</i> (Feast of San Salvador)
September 15	Independence Day
October 12	Columbus Day
November 2	<i>Día de los Muertos</i> (All Souls' Day)
December 25	Christmas
December 31	New Year's Eve

**variable dates*

■ Personal Perspective

When I came to the United States, I found studying to be very easy. I was happy about that because in El Salvador school is very demanding. Here, for example, tests cover a whole range of items, from easy to difficult, but at home all the questions were the hardest ones imaginable, so you study for the hardest ones. You don't have a choice. If you fail, you fail. There are no second chances, no summer school.

—*Salvadoran university student in the United States*

■ Historical Perspective

IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Large-scale Salvadoran immigration to the United States, legal and illegal, began in the early 1980s as those caught in the midst of a violent civil war sought refuge abroad. In addition to death squads that roamed the country arbitrarily murdering some 70,000 citizens, social and political repression and major economic failings on a national scale caused great suffering and sacrifice on the part of the people of El Salvador. Between 1979 and 1991, more than one-fifth of the population (approximately 1.5 million)—mostly young, high school-educated men—fled the country.

Today approximately one Salvadoran in 1,000 leaves the country, primarily to find work abroad. Most Salvadoran immigrants in the United States occupy blue-collar positions, but nearly 25 percent of El Salvador's immigrants aged 25 or older have attended college. Studies report that approximately 25 percent of Salvadoran families in the States have an annual income of US\$50,000 or more. In fact, 81 percent of male Salvadoran immigrants are employed. While some 50 percent earn less than US\$30,000 per year, most families are able to earn enough *migradollars* to send home. An estimated US\$2.5 billion are reinvested in El Salvador this way. The practice not only helps support remaining family members but is considered a type of development aid for El Salvador as it constitutes more than 17 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, almost 825,000 Salvadoran immigrants were living in the United States. This number, however, provides only part of the picture as many who registered during the last census did not indicate their specific country of origin. Some estimates place the actual number of Salvadorans at two million. Many, however, are undocumented. The states reporting the largest numbers of immigrants from El Salvador according to 2003 data include, in numeric order, California, Texas, New York, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, and Florida.

HISTORICAL SYNOPSIS

In 1821 El Salvador won its independence from Spain, afterward belonging to the Central American Federation until 1839. A succession of military governments administered the nation for more than a century. Their reputation for brutality and repression and the dramatically widening socioeconomic gulf between rich and poor led to a left-wing insurgency in the late 1970s to which the military government responded with a severe crackdown on dissidents and benign indifference to the formation of paramilitary death squads. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the Salvadoran government was supported by the U.S. government through the investment of some US\$4 billion in aid and military training. The civil war that erupted during this period lasted 12 years and ended with peace accords in 1992.

Though improvements are under way, the country is still plagued with serious economic and social problems largely brought about by the enormous gap and resulting inequalities between rich and poor. To complicate matters, El Salvador's population is disproportionately large in comparison to its land mass and constitutes the smallest nation in Central America. Malnutrition and disease proliferate in the countryside, and medical attention, whether one lives in an urban or rural area, is reported to be poor. It is estimated that 85 percent of El Salvador's water is undrinkable and that the number of deaths resulting from consuming contaminated water surpasses the death toll from the country's civil war.

The 1992 peace accords brought democracy to El Salvador as well as modernization of education and industry. Despite the promise of a brighter future, the plight of many Salvadorans remains a critical issue. The loss of adult men to the war or to emigration has created a generation of young people whose families are either led by a single mother (25 percent of households) or whose parents are working abroad, leaving them in the care of grandparents or other struggling relatives. For approximately 8 percent of those under the age of 18, both parents are living abroad. The incidence of gang activity, school dropouts, and teen pregnancy has skyrocketed as a result. A reported 60 percent of Salvadoran children today are born out of wedlock, and many children end up living on the street without the structure or emotional and financial support of even a single-parent family. Other Salvadoran youth whose parents have emigrated enjoy many of the amenities so coveted by their peers in the United States. Being on the receiving end of CD and DVD players, fashionable clothing, and even cars leaves some young people feeling that hard work and discipline are irrelevant to their lives. Their school performance suffers as a result, and it is not unusual for these young people to become cynical and apathetic, believing as they sometimes do that they have no control over their futures. Finally, because the country's military governments have failed repeatedly to recognize the severe poverty and desperation of the majority of Salvadorans, the memory of widespread death, torture, fear, and paranoia has not been extinguished.

■ Deep Culture Perspective

DEEP CULTURE BELIEFS

- Salvadoran culture is more collectivist than individualistic. Interdependence of friends, coworkers, and family allows individuals to receive the support of the group with the expectation of reciprocity as needed in the future. A nurturing and cooperative attitude toward one another is strongly encouraged, although individuals from wealthier families may promote a greater degree of competitiveness.
- Women are generally assigned traditional roles. Girls are expected to marry, look after children, and obey their husbands, none of which requires an education, according to both parents and daughters. Girls are expected to be chaste on their wedding night, but the value of chastity for young men is not equally important. While *machismo* is commonly understood to be part of Salvadoran culture, the female version is less obvious but still prevalent. *Machisma* or *matriarquia* characterizes a woman who at home controls the family by vehemently scolding its members, especially the husband. A *mandona*, or one who orders another person about, may bully a husband into doing household chores and fetching items from the store.
- Men are not only the family's wage earners, but they occupy most positions of authority and power in virtually every aspect of Salvadoran culture, although this is slowly changing. Sometimes men look down on women, and domestic abuse is not uncommon nor is sexual harassment at work or in public. Fathers and mothers alike are complicit in fostering the values and behaviors of *machismo* in their sons. Boys are encouraged to attend school and to use their formal training to support their future families. They are allowed to be more independent than girls.
- Salvadorans have a reputation for hard work to the extent that laziness is thought to be sinful. Regardless of one's occupation, if a person is holding down a job, he (less often she) is considered worthy of the respect of others.
- Salvadorans tend to respect rules, regulations, and other forms of control. Many are averse to risk and change.
- Humility is a virtue that most Salvadorans value in themselves and others as is self-discipline in the face of adversity. Bavolek (1997) reports that the top five values of Salvadorans are family unity, religion, respect for elders, hard work, and education.
- El Salvador is called "the land of the smile" in recognition of its friendly and outgoing people.

PROVERBS

- A closed mouth gathers no flies.
- The one who does not cry does not suckle.
- He who goes to bed with a baby wakes up wet.
- The sleeping shrimp gets carried away by the current.
- He who wants blue sky has to work for it.
- Better one bird in the hand than a hundred in the air.

FOLK TALE

According to Mayan legend, a beautiful young woman gave birth to a son who was the offspring of an illicit love affair. The woman's father, ashamed and furious, cast an evil spell on both mother and child. For his part, the boy was cursed to live his whole life the size of a child. Moreover, his feet were turned backward as a reflection of the twisted love between his mother and father. Indeed, as he got older, he became quite ugly. He was the size of a ten-year-old, had a shiny fat belly, and his toenails were long and pointed. He wandered from village to village wearing nothing more than a hat, so that people, and especially young girls, were afraid of him. El Cipitío was rarely seen, however. At night he would creep into homes and scrounge for burned bread crusts left in the ashes.

El Cipitío had a tendency to fall in love easily. He would appear to the girl of his fancy when she was all alone, declare his love, and beg her to marry him. One day he approached Rufina in this way. Rufina's mother calmed her daughter's fear and gave her a secret that she could use to get rid of El Cipitío. The next day Rufina told El Cipitío that he must demonstrate his love for her by traveling to the ocean and bringing back a wave. El Cipitío was filled with joy and happily left for the sea but never returned.

■ Administrative Perspective

OFFICIAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY

In 1995 El Salvador's Ministry of Education (MINED) launched a ten-year plan to reform secondary education. The plan calls for making education available to a greater number of adolescents, raising educational standards, and improving school administration. These objectives are part of MINED's four overarching goals, namely to prepare Salvadoran youth for participation in the global marketplace, engender responsible citizenship to promote peace, develop greater appreciation for diversity, and provide the training necessary to overcome generations of poverty. While these

measures are aimed at reducing Salvadoran youth's interest in gang activity and violence, the rising rate of teen pregnancy, and the overall disaffection of young people, El Salvador's leaders hope these reforms will also improve the country's economic well being.

The curricular changes under way include requiring students to spend 40 hours per week in class as compared with the 27-hour seat-time requirement before the plan was implemented. New methodologies are also being introduced to replace the previous emphasis on memorization and mechanical learning strategies, and new courses on the environment, population, health, equity, values, human rights, and consumerism are being not just added to the conventional curriculum but integrated into it so that courses in physics, algebra, or geography, for example, become more practical by addressing the social, economic, and political contexts that give them meaning.

EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

See the Education at a Glance table on page 7.

EL SALVADOR

Level/Age	Hours/Calendar	Language of Instruction	Compulsory Attendance	Exams	Grading System	Curriculum	Cost	Enrollment
<i>Parrularia</i> (pre-school) ages 4-5	Variable	Spanish	No	None	None	Language development and social skills		42% of total pre-school-age children are enrolled. No data available
<i>Kinder</i> (kindergarten) age 6	Jan. 15 to Oct. 31 (public schools)	Spanish	No	None	None	Pre-reading skills taught in some private pre-schools		
<i>Basica</i> (primary) Grades 1-9 ages 7-15	Late Aug. to early June (private schools) Public schools: 7:00 AM-noon with 20-minute midmorning break Private schools: 7:00 AM-3:00 PM with midmorning and lunch break	Spanish, but English in bilingual schools. Sometimes the same curriculum is offered in English in the morning and Spanish in the afternoon.	Yes, up to age 14	Fill-in-the-blank, essay, definitions, summaries, paraphrasing. Some oral testing; recitation of memorized lists of terms or definitions Students must pass all final course exams in order to advance to next grade (one out of every two children nationwide has repeated at least one grade). University entrance exam introduced in early 1990s, but little academic competition for admission.	0-10 scale 6-10 pass 0-5 fail No letter grades are assigned.	Mathematics, local and national language, science, music, social studies/ history, reading, art	Free for public school students, but school fees come to approximately US\$275 per year.	80.9% of primary school-age children are enrolled. 71% of primary school students are girls. 80.7% of primary school-age male students are enrolled. 70.7% of primary school students reach 5 th grade. 23% of the Salvadoran adult population has no formal education; 21% has 1-3 years; 23% has 4-6 years. The average Salvadoran adult has 5.2 years of schooling.
<i>Bachillerato General</i> Grades 10-11 ages 15-17			No			<i>Bachillerato General</i> Students take language and literature, mathematics, natural sciences, social and civic studies, foreign language, information systems, adolescent psychology, plus optional activities.	Tuition at binational or bilingual private schools; the most expensive private schools, may reach US\$2,500 per year plus a US\$3,000 initial sign-up fee.	39.3% of secondary school-age children are enrolled. 36.7% of secondary school-age girls are enrolled; 37% of eligible males are enrolled.
<i>Bachillerato Vocacional</i> Grades 10-12 ages 15-18			No			<i>Bachillerato Vocacional</i> Students take specialized courses for the job market.		14% of the adult Salvadoran population has 7-9 years of education; 12% has 10-12 years.
University ages 17+	Same as above with classes held during the day and evening	Spanish	No	Written thesis required at end of the 5 th year of the undergraduate degree.		No general education requirements. Students proceed directly to specializations. No electives.	Public universities can cost as little as US\$36 per year, but more typically tuition costs between US\$400 and US\$2,000 per year.	18% of secondary school graduates are enrolled in universities. 7% of the Salvadoran population has 13+ years of education.

■ Surface Culture Perspective

CLASSROOMS

- There are enormous differences between public and private schools and between urban and rural schools in El Salvador, particularly in terms of facilities. Ninety percent of El Salvador's secondary schools exist in urban areas, and 98 percent of private schools are city based. In addition, urban schools in general receive disproportionately favorable amounts of government funding. The San Salvador school district, for example, receives nearly 50 percent of the government's educational allocation. Some 45 percent of secondary school students attend private schools. Public schools and classrooms tend to be in chronic disrepair with worse conditions prevalent in rural settings. Very few schools have air conditioning. Rural schools may consist of little more than sheets of corrugated metal propped up on two-by-fours over a dirt floor.
- Basic supplies such as blackboards and chalk—particularly those that are up-to-date—may be scarce. Students are given a list of school supplies that they must purchase to begin the school year. Schools do not supply books, paper, pencils, erasers, rulers, or any other student materials. These can be costly, especially for families with a large number of children in school.
- Decorations such as flags, posters, and portraits of Salvadoran leaders are generally not present in classrooms.
- School campuses may vary as far as layout is concerned. Most are one-, two-, or three-story structures without corridors, cafeterias, assembly halls, health rooms, computer labs, gyms, or libraries. There is usually an open space where students congregate for recess or school assemblies, and small kiosks where students may purchase snacks may be on or near campus. Some schools have a small *capilla* or chapel on campus. Many private schools (even some small universities) operate out of private homes.
- Official reports estimate the teacher-student ratio at the primary level to be 1:25. At the secondary level, the ratio is 1:29. However, actual figures are much higher due to problems with educational data collection and reporting in El Salvador.

TEACHERS' STATUS

- Salvadorans hold teachers in the same high esteem as they do doctors, priests, and other professionals. English teachers, in particular, are well respected.
- Primary and secondary school teachers receive three years of university or technical institute preparation before they begin their careers in education.

- Teachers in El Salvador work under difficult circumstances and receive very low pay, necessitating many to take on additional assignments in private schools or to teach more than one shift at their home schools. As a result, some teachers may be in the classroom for up to 12 hours per day from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM.
- The mean monthly salary for teachers in 2002 was approximately US\$380.
- A law introduced in 1995 aims to improve the quality of education by rewarding teachers who pursue advanced degrees and demonstrate excellence in the classroom. According to this law, pay increases for teachers are to be earned as a result of their credentials and performance rather than length of tenure in the school system.
- Many teachers suffered persecution and death if they chose to join a teachers' union during the country's civil war. The decline in the number of teachers led to the informal establishment of a volunteer teaching system.

TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

- According to Salvadoran students and their parents, teachers hold among the highest positions possible in a community.
- Neither children nor parents are likely to challenge a teacher's decision. The teacher may be very direct in advising parents how to treat children at home and reprimanding parents when their children misbehave or do not try hard enough in school. Classes are cancelled on parent-teacher conference days; the event is too important to relegate to an evening time slot.
- The relationship between teacher and student is similar to that in North America. At the beginning, interactions tend to be more formal, but later, depending on the teacher, the relationship may become friendlier, yet still be respectful. In terms of strictness, however, Salvadoran teachers are considered to be less lenient than U.S. teachers in the event of misbehavior and more serious in their expectations of students.
- Teachers expect students to be attentive and quiet during the lesson. Students are seated in rows rather than in clusters or pairs in order to discourage socializing during class.

TEACHING PRACTICES

- Traditional teaching practices still prevail in El Salvador, meaning that teachers tend to be authoritarian and discourage active student participation. The teacher has full control over the content, pace, and structure of the class.
- One of the most common teaching strategies in El Salvador is dictation. Teachers read from a text while students record the lecture verbatim in their copybooks, or teachers write notes on the blackboard for students

to copy carefully. Rote memorization of the notes followed by recitation, either individually or in chorus, is standard practice. Teachers may also base their lectures on the textbook rather than read from it verbatim. This allows them to clarify concepts and terms so that the students benefit more from the material.

- The students' comprehension of the homework is determined the day after it is assigned by posing questions about the text that correspond to the level of difficulty and mastery expected of the students. If the students have difficulty with the questions, the teacher proceeds to explain and elaborate upon the concepts to reinforce and prepare the students for upcoming exams.

TEACHERS' DRESS

- Some private schools require teachers to wear uniforms. At a private religious school for girls, for example, the teachers may wear ankle-length skirts and high-collared blouses.
- Younger teachers today can wear their regular street clothes to class. Their attire may include jeans.

DISCIPLINE AND CLASS MANAGEMENT

- It is not unusual for more traditional teachers to use mild corporal punishment to respond to inappropriate student behavior. They may, for example, strike a student's hand with a wooden ruler. More modern teachers may simply send the misbehaving student to the principal's office. Another common practice is to move the student's desk out of the classroom and oblige him or her to sit there until class is finished. Sometimes teachers will report offensive behavior to parents via the student's daily pocket agenda. Such notes are expected to be read and signed by the parents and returned to the teacher. Teachers may also use the student's agenda to report a low grade on an assignment.
- Infractions that will usually result in punishment include talking in class while the teacher is lecturing, throwing objects, or hitting other students.
- Most schools have a weekly activity called *Lunes Cívico*. Every Monday the students arrange themselves by grade and class in the school courtyard, sing the national anthem, and recite the pledge of allegiance. Each week different students are selected to carry the El Salvador flag and, in some schools, those from other Central American countries. A tribute to one of these countries may follow and may include singing the national anthem of the selected country and/or performing dances or reciting historical or cultural facts about that chosen nation.

STUDENTS' CIRCUMSTANCES

- Schools in the countryside can be located too far from a child's home to make attendance possible. Rural secondary schools are not as prevalent as primary schools.
- Primary education is free, but such items as mandatory school uniforms, monthly school fees, and basic supplies can cost up to US\$275 per year, a sum that is often beyond the means of rural families.
- When children from poor families reach adolescence, their attendance at school may be regarded as too great a sacrifice to continue. Consequently, many students drop out to help at home with childcare or fieldwork or by selling a range of inexpensive items such as tortillas or cigarettes on the street.
- Students often live in abject conditions and come from dirty neighborhoods and overcrowded homes constructed from cinderblock and corrugated metal over a cement floor. Hot water is a luxury that most families cannot enjoy; 30 percent of urban and 78 percent of rural households do not have running water at all. Air pollution in the cities has become a major problem.
- Appliances such as telephones, stoves, microwaves, and washing machines are rare, although many homes have a television. Programs broadcast from the United States are popular. Many Salvadorans own cell phones.
- After immigrating to the United States, most Salvadorans are resigned to living in substandard housing in unsafe neighborhoods while working multiple, low-paying menial jobs. Their absence from home often leaves children essentially unsupervised and feeling insecure.
- In all likelihood, Salvadoran immigrants who entered the United States in the 1980s suffered extreme hardship, terror, and danger both at home and in their exodus, especially if they were escorted here by *coyotes*, or border smugglers. They arrived traumatized and with little formal education or English language skills. They may pass deeply rooted feelings of anxiety to their children.

STUDENT-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

- Students tend to form strong friendships in school because cohorts of learners move together through the school system, rather than being assigned to different classes from one year to the next. Cliques of two or three students are not uncommon.
- It is not unusual for a student to have many of his or her relatives attending the same school. Students frequently gravitate to family during recess and may get together after class to socialize and study.
- Public schools, until recently, were segregated by gender. Many private religious schools continue this practice.

- Many Salvadoran students will help each other during tests. For example, they may pass notes to each other bearing answers to certain items or may enable a friend seated at an adjacent desk to copy from his or her own test paper.
- Couples who are discovered holding hands, kissing, or engaging in any other romantic or sexual behavior at school will be suspended.

STUDENTS' LEARNING PRACTICES

- Students study independently when the subject matter is theory oriented, but they may nevertheless gather together in one place to study to keep each other company.
- Students will form pairs or groups when they have to solve problems or work on a project. Often one person in the group may understand an item better than the others and can explain and clarify it for the others. At another time, a different person will offer an insight or solution that the others may not have yet discovered. In this manner, each member of the group gives his or her best and the students complement each other and reach a level of excellence that might not have been possible had they worked individually.
- As tests can mean the difference between repeating a grade and advancing on to the next, students may engage in various kinds of “cheating” to enhance their test performance. Writing answers on the palms or forearms is a common strategy as is hiding a small “cheat sheet” under one’s clothing. Needless to say, students who are caught cheating will either be given a zero for the assessment or a note will be sent home to the parents.

STUDENTS' DRESS

- Even in poorer communities, schools usually require students to wear a uniform. Those unable to afford uniforms may not be allowed to attend classes. A school uniform can cost a parent a week’s salary. Shoes tend to be more expensive than the shirts, trousers, or skirts that may constitute the dress code.
- School uniforms are distinctive for each school in terms of color combination but generally consist of a pleated skirt and white, short-sleeved blouse for girls and dark or khaki trousers and white shirt for boys. Both boys and girls are normally required to wear black or brown loafers. Uniforms are usually made from inexpensive fabric.
- Boys’ hair must be neatly trimmed and relatively short. Neither boys nor girls may sport body piercing or tattoos. Students cannot wear hats in school. Regardless of the cost or quality of the uniform, students must keep them absolutely clean and free of wrinkles. Shirts cannot be worn untucked.

GIFTS FOR THE TEACHER

- Candy, desk ornaments, picture frames, inexpensive jewelry, and flowers are appropriate gifts for teachers. (White flowers, however, are only given in the event of death.) Individual students and their parents usually give the teacher a gift for Teachers' Day, Christmas, or for his or her birthday. A birthday cake may also be presented to the teacher and shared with the class in some cases.
- Students pay tribute to their teachers on Teachers' Day by holding an assembly in the school courtyard. They will often line up according to class and grade, listen to the principal give a short speech honoring the teachers, and perform some kind of rehearsed dance. Students sometimes also prepare parties in their individual classrooms, bringing food from home and gifts for the teacher.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Salvadorans are taught that it is impolite to point one's finger at another person. In the case of summoning a friend, they stretch out the right arm with the palm down and wiggle their fingers.
- Expressive facial communication and hand gestures often accompany speech.
- It is considered vulgar to yawn in public.
- Salvadorans may simply nod or shake hands when they meet but may grasp the other's hand less firmly and hold on to it longer than their North American counterparts. A man must wait for a woman to initiate a handshake.
- It is appropriate for couples to walk hand-in-hand in public.
- As a rule, Salvadorans avoid and do not approve of loud public discourse.
- Being on time for a meeting or for class may not seem to be a serious commitment to a Salvadoran. Students are rarely absent from class, however, unless they have a very good reason.

FORMS OF ADDRESS

- People in positions of authority expect others to address them by title alone—e.g., Doctor for physicians, *Profesor/a* for teachers at all levels of education, *Ingeniero/a* for engineers, *Arquitecto/a* for architects, and *Abogado* for attorneys.
- People who are elderly or strangers are usually addressed using *Señor/a* or *Señorita* plus family name.
- Salvadorans often inherit one last name from their father (e.g., Lopez) and one from their mother (e.g., Alvarado), with the father's name occurring first, as in Paula Lopez Alvarado. However, one does not use both names when addressing the individual; thus, Paula Lopez Alvarado would be called Paula Lopez.

APPROPRIATE TOPICS

- Asking about another's family is appropriate for conversation as is discussion of Salvadoran culture, history, and geography.
- It is best to avoid discussing national or local politics or religion with Salvadorans unless a level of trust has been built between interlocutors. It is reported that teachers at some schools in El Salvador have been advised to confine class discussion to uncontroversial topics to reduce the possibility of conflict in the classroom.

OUTSIDE OF CLASS

- The volume and pace of school work for Salvadoran students, especially for those attending urban schools, tends to be heavier and faster compared with their North American counterparts. Instructors assign a good deal of homework every day to allow students to learn outside the classroom as well as during the lesson.
- The type of homework assigned depends on the course but may include exercises, projects, research, or other activities that strengthen and complement the students' knowledge base and their readiness for exams.
- Students from affluent families frequently take private lessons after school. They may study piano or dance, get additional English language tutoring, or join a tennis or soccer team.

■ Potential Adjustment Challenges

PROBLEMS/SOLUTIONS

Problem

The father of one of my Salvadoran students doesn't have a job, but he seems to be in good health and is relatively young. Wouldn't he set a better example for his kids if he worked?

Solution

Salvadorans who emigrated during or shortly after the country's civil war may have been witness to atrocities, such as the murder of family members. They are likely to fall victim to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The sound of helicopters, for example, may traumatize a person who associates the sound (or any sudden loud noise) with war and terror. The effects of PTSD are often so debilitating as to prevent individuals from holding down a job.

Problem

I have a young boy in my class who recently joined his parents who immigrated to the United States from El Salvador five years ago. He seems totally disinterested in learning, even laying his head on his desk when I work with him during pull-out sessions.

Solution

It is not unusual for Salvadoran children to be left behind when their fathers or both parents emigrate to the United States, an event that is particularly difficult for young children to comprehend. Many make the journey themselves once their parents' circumstances have stabilized, which can be many years after the initial departure. Sometimes they join fathers who have divorced their wives and remarried in the States, thus complicating the adjustment process. Depression and "acting out" can occur as a result of the clash between the child's expectations of a happy family life and greater material comfort on one hand and the reality of life as an immigrant on the other.

Problem

I thought Salvadoran immigrants were poverty-stricken and war-weary, but I have a student from El Salvador who talks about his maid back home and the club where he and his siblings went to swim and play tennis.

Solution

Salvadoran urban dwellers may not have experienced the horrors of civil war in the same direct fashion as those living in the country. There is a great deal of economic and social class disparity between Salvadorans as well, and so teachers should not expect the backgrounds of their Salvadoran students to be similar.