

EDHER CALLATA CHAMPA



Edher is 9 years old and included into the 3rd grade classroom at I.E. Andres Alvarino Caceres in the district of Zarsuela in Cusco, Peru. This is Edher's second year being included in a regular education school after attending CEBEP "Camino Nuevo" for 2 years. (Cusco's only private/non- profit school for special education.)

Edher's mother was very young when he was born. After several unsuccessful attempts to try and abort her child, her son was born with mild brain damage known as cerebral palsy. Edher has spent most of his life running around the streets of Cusco under the care of his grandmother who has a food kiosk outside of the government hospital. His mother has left him in the care of her family members for many years as she looks for work in cities far from Cusco. His primary caretaker is now his 20 year old aunt who has assumed his responsibility and taken on roles of motherhood very early in life. In attempts to support the family, we have hired Edher's aunt to work with us at Camino Nuevo in order to encourage her into a professional field. She is now studying psychology in Cusco and works part time in our severe disabilities classroom.

Edher has an amazing success story of a child being included into regular education. Children like Edher deserve to study along same aged peers and develop healthy friendships without having to be isolated from society, which is what most special education centers continue to do. Camino Nuevo teacher, Yuneli Lovaton, has been working with Edher and 4 more classmates at Zarsuela school for 2 consecutive years and has been able to report incredible success. Edher has buddies who play soccer with him at recess, his academic achievements have risen to a second grade level in reading and writing, and his emotional maturity is that of a 9 year old. He even takes the bus by himself to school daily.

Our goal is to use Camino Nuevo as a transitional center to prepare students for inclusion into regular education schools. We see numerous benefits for not only kids like Edher but for his classmates who are learning to grow up alongside peers with different abilities, therefore creating a whole new generation of sensitized community members.

MATSUE UGARTE CUEVA



Matsue (right) with peer and teacher

Matsue is 9 years old and was our first student to include into a regular education school in 2011. Most people say that you can not include children with Autism into schools but we disagree. It was not an easy beginning for Matsue as she was included into a first grade classroom with part time support. It was very difficult for her to adapt to a new environment, new peers, new structure and needed many support tools to help her understand the routines of the day and the expectations upon her as a typical student. She would often become frustrated and run out of the classroom crying or start screaming in the classroom. It took her about 6 months to adapt to her new school and of course with many obstacles we had to resolve along the way.

CEBEP Camino Nuevo teacher Yuneli Lovaton (pictured above) has been key in the successful inclusion of Matsue. Prof. Lovaton works daily at I.E. Andres Alvarino Caceres school in the district of Zarzuela in Cusco, working with 5 Camino Nuevo students included into a 3rd grade classroom.

Matsue has shown great success with peers. For a person with Autism, socializing and making friends is always challenging but Matsue has learned to participate with peers through what she loves most: music. Matsue will often be called to the front of the class to lead her peers in singing morning songs and her specialty is reciting the prayers she has memorized. In the picture above, Matsue was invited with another peer on the first day of school, 2013, to recite the Lords Prayer in front of the entire school! She has learned to participate with other classmates at recess and interact with peers during school hours. Although Matsue still does not pronounce words very clearly, her academic achievements have soared and she has excellent reading, writing skills and artistic abilities.

Matsue comes from a very supportive family and her parents have also been key members in the success of her inclusion. It is very important for family members to be empowered and participate as any other family member in school activities. We know Matsue will continue to reach her goals and be a successful community member in the future.

