



Monteverde Friends School/Escuela de los Amigos

September 2021

[www.mfschool.org](http://www.mfschool.org)

## Protocols Don't Stop the Fun and Celebrations



*Dancing with teacher Melanie for the Día de los niños*

It seems like it was just yesterday that we were welcoming students back to school. Here we are, though, already halfway through our first term (quarter) of the year.

Perhaps as a sign of how much we are all adjusting to living with a pandemic, the many protocols we follow for school didn't stop us from both fun and meaningful holidays in September -- Día de los niños and the bicentennial of Costa Rica's independence from Spain and Mexico (see below).

Sadly, COVID infections in Costa Rica continue at very high levels, peaks unseen in the first year of the pandemic. We are delighted that here in Monteverde, virtually all of our colegio (7th to 12th grade) students are vaccinated, along with their teachers. We look forward to vaccines being available for our primary students, hopefully in the near future.

Despite those gains, international travel -- the core of Monteverde's economy -- remains down. Countrywide, international arrivals are down 66% for the year. So we know we have a big task ahead, continuing to raise a great deal more scholarship funds than traditional for MFS.

But we are also making exciting plans -- e.g. exploring whether we could return to being one school on one campus, hopefully by next semester. Meanwhile, read on to hear about our celebrations this month and to learn what it really means when we say we are a bilingual school.

### Watch Your EMail For an Invitation to Our Virtual Pie Social!

Join in this 70-year old tradition for supporting the Monteverde Friends School.

Learn about some of the history of how the local community has enjoyed delicious pies and socializing while helping MFS provide high quality education.



No, we can't send pies internationally. For those who **donate** in the next couple of weeks, we will be sending the recipes and a chance to chat with our expert pie makers.

Please see your email soon for details!

NOTE: Recent and recurring donors will automatically receive the recipes.

## Special Days in September



When Christopher Columbus landed in Costa Rica in 1502, there were two indigenous communities, reflecting influences from the north and the south. Sadly, those communities were quickly defeated by troops with Columbus, and most of Central America -- Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua and Costa Rica -- became colonies of Spain for the next 300 years then briefly part of Mexico once Mexico gained its independence.

But in 1821, Costa Rica and the other countries declared their independence from all territories and became separate countries. So this year the usual celebration of independence was especially important, marking Costa Rica's bicentennial of freedom.

Each year since the 1960 a torch has been carried in a relay of young students for over 1,000 miles from Guatemala to Costa Rica -- this year in person after last year's virtual torch run. In the course of a week, the fire of the torch is passed from school to school, student to student as the five countries celebrate their independence.

As in prior years, MFS participated in the torch run, first for the primary students at our MFS campus, then for the Cloud Forest School and the MFS classes sharing the CEC campus.

Celebrations did not stop with the torch run! Many students dressed in traditional clothing in the colors of the Costa Rican flag -- blue, white and red. Lessons for the day and week focused on the history of Costa Rican independence and the values that shape the country.

On a less serious note, we also celebrated Día de los niños (Day of the Children) on September 9<sup>th</sup>. A counterpart to Mother's Day and Father's Day, activities focused on all sorts of fun for our primary students.

To keep students in small groups to minimize contagion, the teachers set up 6 stations at our MFS campus and the primary students participated from fun station to fun station. Each station took a different approach.

Noodles -- usually used with swimming -- took on several purposes. Students, often dressed in silly costumes, passed under the noodles for a limbo station, jumped over the noodles at another station, aimed rings to land on the noodle, etc. Other stations offer silly dancing and other games.

A wonderful, fun day for all!



## Do You Know the Difference between a Language School and a Bilingual School?

We get frequent inquiries from people certified in ESL (English as a Second Language) or TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) who want to teach at our school. Similarly, we get requests from international parents who want their children to attend MFS for a couple of months to learn Spanish.

We have to say "no" to requests like this, as it simply is not the sort of education the Monteverde Friends School offers. We offer a bilingual or dual language approach, which we feel has more lasting value.

That means that while there are some basic lessons teaching basic English at our kindergarten levels, the rest of language learning at MFS happens through immersion. Some classes are taught in English, others are taught in Spanish. It is through that exposure that MFS students become fluent in both languages.

Around the MFS campus, it is not unusual to hear conversations start in one language and switch to another. In some cases, where adults understand what they hear but are uncomfortable speaking another language, you'll overhear conversations where one person is speaking English and the other speaks Spanish.

We do have both English and Spanish classes as part of our curriculum, but those focus on literature or poetry, not on teaching one of the languages.

Bilingual fluency offers economic benefits for our students, especially here in Monteverde where tourism dominates the economy. Further, more and more international companies are locating operations in Costa Rica and bilingualism opens the door to more job opportunities.

A **study** done at the University of Costa Rica concluded that from 2005 to 2017, "Our estimates show that for all wage earners, English speakers have a monthly wage that is 20.6% higher than their non-English-speaking counterparts. While for private sector workers, the premium estimated is 28.4%."

And the benefits of bilingualism learned in an immersion style may go well beyond economic benefits. [Studies of the brain](#) are finding major benefits of bilingualism in terms of attention span, empathy, reading skills, and perhaps even long-term protection against dementia.

It is great to find evidence that the bilingual approach we have long adopted has more and more benefits!

**Apreciamos nuestro hermoso país/ Let Us Cherish Our Beautiful Country**

*A poem created by our 7/8 Spanish class*

(Original)

(translation)

Ser patriota es ser honesto con uno mismo.

Being a patriot is being honest with yourself.

¿Para qué ser leal a un país que ha marginado a muchos?

Why be loyal to a country that has marginalized many?

Parece un largo camino, pero se hace corto si recordamos la riqueza que somos y conocemos.

It seems a long way, but it becomes short if we remember the wealth that we are and know.

Recordemos que la bandera nos representa.

Let us remember that the flag represents us.

Alza esa bandera digna para que brille tricolor.

Raise that dignified flag so that tricolor shines.

Nadie es gobernante, todo es para todos.

No one is a ruler, everything is for everyone.

Nadie debe pelear, todos merecemos lo mismo.

No one should fight, we all deserve the same.

No se necesita ejército para ser un país importante.

You don't need an army to be a major country.

Todos breteando, arreando a los bueyes que jalan una carreta de muchos colores.

All struggling, herding the oxen that pull a cart of many colors.

Viva la flora y la fauna, no todos tienen árboles, no cualquiera tiene paz.

Long live the flora and fauna, not everyone has trees, not everyone has peace.

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