



Green Schools Around the World - AASA Trip Recap from the Dominican Republic

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On Nov. 29, 2011, I began a week-long trip to Constanza, La Vega in the Dominican Republic. I am the project director of the Healthy School Environments project at the [American Association of School Administrators](#) (AASA) and was invited to participate in a [Lifetouch Memory Mission Trip](#). Lifetouch and [World Servants](#) collaborated on building a school for the NGO [Cecaini](#), which is managed by Pastor Angel Moreta. The mission trip's goal was to complete the first phase of the school project—the lower level for four classrooms, each holding 20-25 students. The school will alleviate the current overcrowding in the Tobias School down the street, which has up to 60 students (K-8) per classroom. The school will be ready in January 2012 as a student center and will be open for classes in August. The principal has already been selected and endorsed by the superintendent.

Over 40 volunteers from AASA, [NAESP](#), NASSP, Lifetouch, World Servants and Cecaini participated in this project. I wanted to go not only to give back, but to observe how the school systems in the Dominican Republic interact with the local agricultural and farming community. I also wanted to see how, if any, indoor air quality issues were addressed. The one thing I noticed was the innate simplicity of this rural building design. Building materials were mostly cinderblocks, mud and tile. This approach is very simple and appropriate for this humid region prone to earthquakes. The construction process is also energy efficient as machines are replaced with good old fashion manual labor. The building is structurally sound and includes features of natural ventilation with large windows and doors and tile flooring, which reduces any exposure to asthma triggers associated with carpet. And because the green movement is everywhere—even in rural Constanza—the building is equipped with compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). Electricity is limited and costly, and in this case, CFLs offer a solution.

Visiting Constanza was a great experience for me, and i'm glad I could share my story with the Center for Green Schools!

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