

# Computer Program

## Why Computers?

While almost 60% of entry-level jobs in Guatemala require computer skills, children in rural communities lack access to computer instruction. In some communities that Cooperative for Education (CoEd) serves, not a single student had touched a computer before the arrival of the Computer Program. When rural, indigenous youth enter the job market without the same training as their urban peers, they face unemployment and economic hardship. As the digital divide grows, so do income disparities, inequality, and poverty. CoEd Computer Centers give rural, indigenous youth opportunities to gain the skills they need to stay in school, secure higher-wage jobs, and permanently raise their standard of living.

“I have been a bank teller for the past two years. I always say I got my job because of my computer skills.”  
— Roberto Xinico Tun, program graduate



All Computer Center students follow a standard, proven curriculum, based on the Internet and Computing Core Certification Global Standard 5 (IC3 GS5)—an internationally-respected computer certification—and aligned with Guatemala’s national curriculum. The course of study consists of 100 lessons spread over a student’s three years of middle school. At the end of each unit, standardized evaluations assess student progress.

## Sustainability

Students’ families pay a small fee (\$3-\$4 per month) for their children to use the computers. The fees go into a “revolving fund,” which is used to cover operating expenses (like maintenance and software updates) and purchase new computer equipment as the original equipment wears out or becomes obsolete. This way, generations of students can benefit from access to computer technology.

Once up and running, the projects are managed by school administration and teachers, with CoEd acting in a supporting role. CoEd also trains local teachers to maintain the technology and instruct computer classes.

## How the Program Works

CoEd establishes Computer Centers in middle schools throughout the Western Highlands, providing young people with access to state-of-the-art technology. Each school community partners with CoEd to renovate or prepare a classroom to be a fully functioning Computer Center, with proper security, wiring, ventilation, and lighting. All equipment is purchased in-country (to secure the lowest possible price and contribute to the local economy) and installed once the space is ready. A typical Computer Center houses 12-30 current-model PCs or 27-42 current-model laptops.

Students receive at least 60 minutes of hands-on computer instruction per week. They learn typing and web navigation as well as the Microsoft Office Suite; develop basic programming skills with Scratch programming; and explore the outside world through RACHEL, a portable server that stores vast amounts of educational content offline.

## Results

12,000 students

94% of Computer Program students demonstrated computer competency.

95% of graduates find a job or continue their education.