

**Prestige International School
Asuncion, Maasin City
Southern Leyte, Philippines**

This is the elementary school that my wife, Melca, and I are building in her hometown in the Philippines. It is a privately owned school, built mostly from our personal funds, in which all tuitions and other sources of income are returned to the school for further development. We started quite modestly with a rather small building (shown in the first photograph) on a lot owned by her parents. The building will be reconverted back to an apartment building when the new school building is built.



The classrooms were small, but adequate for the approximately 35 students we have in pre-school, kindergarten and first grade. However, we needed room for second grade and above and many more parents in the community want to enroll their children. Hence, we purchased a large lot nearby and the perimeter fence is now complete; its construction is shown in the photograph at the top of the next page. We will eventually build at least eight 8 by 8 meter classrooms. They will be arranged around a courtyard with open space behind the building for outdoor activities. Building construction is underway. We plan to have, in addition to classrooms, a cafeteria, a library, a small museum, administration space, and science laboratory space.

We currently employ four teachers, a manager, a bus driver/handyman, and a part-time accountant. The staff will increase as we add more grade levels up to grade six. The school is permitted and registered with the Philippine Department of Education and one staff member attends the required monthly meetings. We will work towards international accreditation. We collect tuition from the families that can afford it and we have some students on various scholarships based on need and class performance.

We hope to provide a modern curriculum with science, and the opportunities that go with the study of

science. Without our school, opportunities to enter first-rate jobs and universities are limited for the students of the town. We hope to change that. Because our teachers use English as the main communication language, our students learn English, the official language of the Philippines, from the very start, rather than the norm of starting in high school. We also introduce Tagalog and Mandarin Chinese in the 1st grade to complement their native Cebuano. With our intended science laboratory, we hope to provide a solid foundation and interest in elementary scientific concepts. During our visits to Maasin, we interact strongly with the teachers.





We have very active participation of the community in this school. Parents assist the teachers during the day by looking after the children. There is already an active parent's association giving input into the running of the school. The annual "Fun Day" and graduation are well attended social events for the town. We are thrilled with the school's success after only three years and believe it will continue to thrive. We will be working over the next couple years to create a trust so that the school will persist indefinitely into the future. We visit every year or two. Our most recent visit was in August, 2008. The photographs on this page are from January and shows the state of construction at that time.



The school is now complete and classes start in June, 2009.

