**From:** **Safe Passage Team** info@safepassage.org
**Subject:** October Newsletter: Catching Up Before the School Year Ends
**Date:** October 22, 2026 at 11:25 AM
**To:** Meaghan Maurice meaghan@safepassage.org

ST

Safe Passage
Camino Seguro

Newsletter | October 2026

# What This Year's Student ***Results*** Tell Us

Twice a year, Safe Passage measures how students are progressing academically and socioemotionally, with a baseline evaluation in February and a follow-up in August. We use this data to evolve our curriculum, inform and expand training for teachers, and to ensure our students are learning and growing at the rates they need to succeed.

Please join us in celebrating the measurable growth and success of our students in 2026!

Across primary school, our students score around or above the 50th percentile when compared with middle-class students throughout Latin America, and compared with students from similar economic

America, and compared with students from similar economic backgrounds in the region, they are **FAR ahead**. In 1st, 2nd, and 6th grades, students reached the 70th and 71st percentiles.

Growth within the school year was significant in several grades, with third graders moving from the 26th percentile in February to the 56th percentile in August, more than doubling their percentile rank, and sixth graders climbing from the 31st to the 71st percentile over the same six months.

Our five- and six-year-olds are building strong foundations in reading, which we know will serve them throughout their lives.. In early literacy, 100% of five-year-olds tested at a high or very high level for the 3rd year in a row, and 95% of six-year-olds scored medium-high or above in pre-reading.

To measure socioemotional health and wellbeing, we implement the **SENA (Sistema de Evaluación de Niños y Adolescentes)**—a rigorous, internationally standardized psychological evaluation tool. This year's results provide empirical proof that our school is not just a place of academic learning, but a **psychological sanctuary.**

When compared against a statistically significant  global reference sample of Spanish-speaking youth, our students drastically outperform standard baselines in core emotional and social categories:

- **75th Percentile for Self-Esteem:** Our students have a healthier, more positive sense of self-worth than **75% of youth** in the general population. Despite living in an environment the world often overlooks, they possess an unshakable sense of personal dignity and purpose.
- **86th Percentile for Social Skills:** Our students outperform **86% of their peers** in empathy, communication, and collaboration. They have transformed situational survival into an extraordinary gift for community-building and mutual support.

**2026 is also the final year of our five-year strategic plan,** and one of its objectives was closing the learning gap the pandemic left behind, which makes this year's academic growth especially meaningful for our community.

These powerful results reflect the daily work of teachers, psychologists, and support staff throughout the school year, and the evaluations help them understand where each student stands and where to focus their support.

As the school year closes on October 23rd, we are grateful to every teacher, staff member, family, and supporter who stayed the course alongside our students.

We are especially proud of students, who continually work hard to learn, grow, and take advantage of every opportunity Safe Passage provides them- our students' commitment to their own future is palpable when you enter our classrooms and that reflects in these results.

Next month, we'll share how this community can help sustain that growth into 2027.

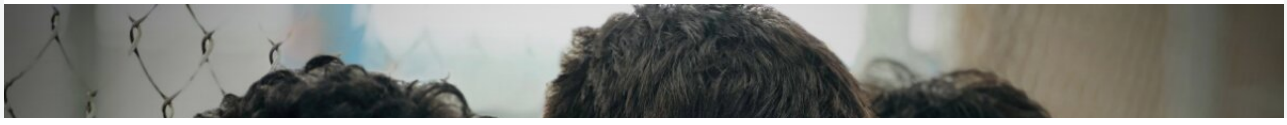
# Start a ***Monthly Gift*** Before the New School Year

Progress across a full school year depends on support that continues every month. Monthly gifts provide a steady base for planning, so teachers, psychologists, and support staff can prepare for January with confidence.

When you start a monthly gift of $25 or more, your name joins the Giving Wall in our middle school building with a hand-painted hummingbird tile, crafted by an Indigenous, family-owned business in San Antonio Palopó. Each tile shows students the wide circle of people invested in their futures

**Become a Monthly Donor**

---



# Four ***Apprentices*** Complete Their Year in Safe Passage Departments

In January, four Safe Passage graduates joined Safe Passage departments as apprentices, beginning ten months of professional experience, training, and paid stipends, and this November they complete that year.

Each of them excelled in their roles this year, showing responsibility, thoughtfulness, and contributing meaningfully to Safe Passage's evolution.

In fact they did SO well that our teams asked to hire them. Over the next few years, we will see more and more of our graduates leading our work.

Meet our four apprentices below and learn about the roles they took on, the skills they built, and what they shared about their experience.

## *Crisly Piche*

*Apprentice, Education Department*

Class of 2025 · Technical Diploma in Food and Beverage

Managed supplies for teachers and students,

supported payroll tracking, updated student and staff records, and covered classes when needed.

*— "This experience has taught me to trust myself and my abilities."*

## *Dulce Castañón*

*Apprentice, Health and Wellness Department, Clinic*

Class of 2025 · Diploma in Sciences and Humanities, Biological Sciences

Tracked students referred to the clinic, documented sick days, helped manage medicine inventory, and supported medical care for middle school students.

*— "I've gained the confidence to ask questions so I can learn."*

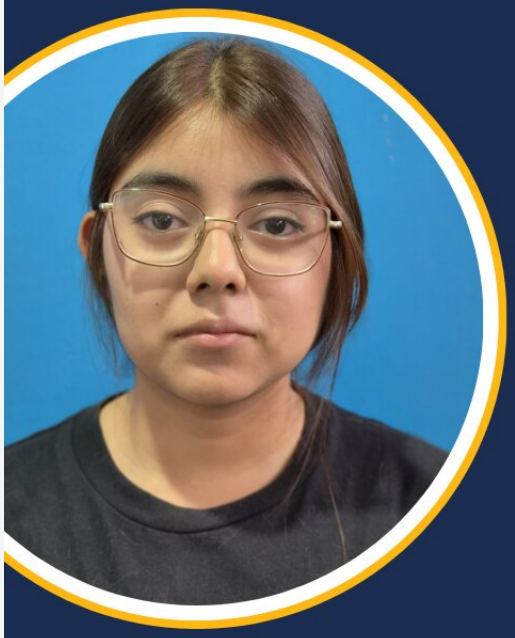
## *Angely Rojas*

*Apprentice, Development Department*

Class of 2025 · Bilingual Secretary Diploma

Kept the donor database up to date, followed up on incoming communications, and supported guided tours with new partners.

*— "There's a first time for everything."*



## *Karen Morales*

*Apprentice, Oportunidades Educational Program*

Managed program platforms, handled inventory, and responded to and processed requests.

*— "I've learned to take on new challenges with more confidence."*

---

TELUS Digital

# English *Conversation Club*

This year, high school students in our Oportunidades program took part in the English Conversation Club, led by TELUS Digital's Corporate Social Responsibility team. Over twelve weeks, TELUS Digital volunteers met online with our affiliates to practice English conversation, building a skill that supports them in their studies and professional life.

When the program came to a close, students recorded short reflections in English about their experience. They talked about improving their listening, speaking, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and about feeling more confident using the language.

"*Practicing in English helped me to achieve my goals.*"
**Oportunidades affiliate**, English Conversation Club

We are grateful to the TELUS Digital volunteers who gave their time to practice alongside our students during this edition of the club.

# Safe Passage's Annual ***Board Meeting*** in Guatemala

From October 15 to 17, members of the Safe Passage Board of Directors spent three days on campus with students and teachers, connecting and engaging in programs first hand, and experiencing parts of Guatemala that deepen cultural and contextual understanding.

Board members shared their excitement for spending time with one another, and especially with the kids. For the first time the business meeting component took place on campus in the new  Middle School building - keeping the board's decision-making grounded by the laughter and voices of the kids which carried through the hallways and classrooms.

This year, there were plenty of moments for reflection. At one point a member of Safe Passage's student counsel asked the board "why do you help us?" Board member Matt Verghese took this question as an opportunity to reflect further. See his reflection below.

Each year, as the board of directors convenes for their annual meeting in Guatemala, we invite our supporters, friends, and family members, whether new to Safe Passage or deeply connected to join us to see how Safe Passage continues to evolve.

Time on campus keeps our leadership close to the daily life of the school,

and visitors leave with a deeper connection to the students they support. If you'd like to experience Safe Passage in person in 2027, learn more at safepassage.org/visit.

# ***Pass the Ladder Down***, a Reflection from a Board Member

I just returned from a trip to Guatemala, where I saw the amazing work Safe Passage does every day. One student asked us a poignant question: "Why do you help us?" It made each of us stop in our tracks and connect with our own personal reasons for getting involved. For me, access to education and opportunity has helped change my life, and it's a personal mission for me to send the ladder down for others.

My parents immigrated to the US from India. My grandparents' focus on education changed our family's path in just two generations. It made my parents' move possible, and it gave me opportunities I wouldn't have had otherwise.

About 20 years ago, as a college student, I visited Safe Passage and saw first-hand how education was changing the lives of people who live near Central America's largest landfill. Safe Passage's late founder, Hanley Denning, showed us around the landfill, and we saw the harsh conditions that families lived in. But when we entered the Safe Passage school, we were met with smiles, laughter, and hugs from the kids. Inside, just a few blocks away from the landfill, kids heard a different message: education, opportunity, hope.

On this trip, I saw what Safe Passage's global support community has made

On this trip, I saw what Safe Passage's global support community has made possible. Some of those same students I met 20 years ago are now enrolled in university or have jobs and opportunities beyond the landfill. Safe Passage alumni have gone on to become doctors and lawyers, and to pursue careers they couldn't have imagined as kids. They inspire the next generation: today, 535 students are enrolled in preschool through high school, and 84% graduate. Across Guatemala, only 4 in 10 kids ever reach high school.

If you've given before, thank you. You are part of these students' journey and have helped send the ladder down. You help provide education, nutrition, healthcare, and social services for every child and family at Safe Passage.

So, why do you help? I hope you'll join me in sending the ladder down so the next generation of Guatemalan kids can become leaders.

With a full heart and gratitude,
**Matthew Verghese**
*Board Member, Safe Passage*

P.S. Matt's hope is for more to **give** today to support each student.

- **$100** helps provide the daily meals kids need to learn
- **$25** a month gives Safe Passage steady support it can plan around – and your name will be featured on a tile on Safe Passage's Giving Wall.

---

Thank you for reading and for following our students through another school year. As classrooms close on October 23, graduations and closing celebrations are just ahead, and we look forward to sharing them with you.

***Warmly,***
The Safe Passage Team

Safe Passage
PO Box 192
New Gloucester, ME 04260

New Gloucester, ME 04260
United States

If you believe you received this message in error or wish to no longer receive email from us, please unsubscribe.