We moved towards closing the gap between disadvantaged schools and those with more resources through an autonomy and school-based management model called the Quality Schools Program—Strengthening and Direct Investment in Schools (PEC-FIDE, for its name in Spanish), designed by Mexicanos Primero and implemented by the federal government, state governments and the Association Programa Lazos. This project aims to strengthen inclusive education, to develop participatory school autonomy, and to guarantee public education free of charge.

In 2012, PEC-FIDE directly affected 215 schools, 16 school zones, and more than 23,000 students. The program is based upon strategic and collaborative school-based planning, participation and shared responsibility by school community members, and provision of economic resources to schools. The goal is to improve educational quality, with strong emphasis placed on supporting students at educational risk and on building the capacities of supervisors, principals, teachers, and parents.

Unlike the classic Quality Schools Program (PEC) model, PEC-FIDE involves entire school zones, selected specifically for their high levels of marginalization and low initial results in ENLACE. Economic resources distributed to the school are managed by parents and principals, so that they are used in school improvement projects designed by the school community, in areas such as psycho-pedagogic attention, professional...
In four years of implementation, we have developed a foundation of evidence and learning about this school-based management model that can be used to scale up the design and integrate it into a comprehensive public policy which places the school in the center of the national educational system. More than 90,000 students have benefited from the project, and it has been presented as a best practice case by international organizations and in reports from the President’s office itself.

The positive impacts of this project can be grouped into three areas: cultural change, shared responsibility of stakeholders, and student achievement. The first noticeable effect is the socialization of high expectations: schools that had not received attention and support in the past consolidated identities as the joint project of a specific community, and not as a “facility of the Ministry of Education,” showing great optimism and determination to pursue continuous progress into the future.

The second effect was intense involvement from school zone supervisors and advisors, the strengthening of relationships between parents and teachers, and support from municipal authorities. In this way, the various stakeholders have developed and fine-tuned a vision of effective participation that does not place responsibility for student learning solely on teachers and establishes natural accountability practices.

The third effect has been improvement in student learning: with a set goal of student progress, the project has also promoted teacher professionalization and the use of diversified materials. In participating schools, the percentage of students scoring at the insufficient level on ENLACE decreased, in some cases from 44% to only 13%; in addition, point gains were consistently above average in comparison to their respective state results, with PEC-FIDE schools scoring up to 100 points higher than state averages in both Spanish and Math.

We presented these results, along with limitations, local perspectives, and lessons learned in these four years of implementation at the 7th session of the PEC-FIDE Advisory Council. Along with the Undersecretary of Basic Education, the head of the Planning and Evaluation Unit, the General Director for Innovation, the National Coordinator for PEC, the Secretary of the National Council on Social Participation in Education, State Coordinators for PEC, and representatives of Lazos, Excelencia Educativa, Suma por la Educación, and the Research Institute for Education Development of the Iberoamerican University, we participated in decision making about the design and continuation of this pilot project.

PEC-FIDE IN PLAIN NUMBERS

- **215** primary and lower secondary schools and **16** school zones in PEC-FIDE.
- **23,000** students benefited, **90,000** graduates.
- **3** states participated in PEC-FIDE: Hidalgo, Guanajuato and State of México.
- An improvement of between **60 to 114** points in ENLACE as a reflection of consistent improvement in learning outcomes.