

PRÓSPERA 

for **Education.**
for **International Companies.**
for **Rapid Growth.**



CASE STUDY:
HIGHER GROUND

“

*It took 90 days from
introduction to Próspera to
opening a school.*

Edward Lunney, Director of School Growth | Higher Ground

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Higher Ground Education is the world's largest Montessori school operator, with locations across the United States, Europe, and Asia. The company's unique business model leverages high-quality Montessori educational practices and local real estate development to deliver educational services across the world. Higher Ground Education has experience opening new schools around the world across various different jurisdictions. The company chose Próspera as the site for their first school in Latin America. Within 90 days of holding an introductory call with Próspera, Higher Ground opened their school in Próspera, Guidepost Montessori Roatán. Within six months, the number of students attending the school doubled, and Guidepost moved to a larger building. Within one year, the number of students served doubled yet again, and growth continues to accelerate. Higher Ground attributes this growth to Próspera's flexible regulatory environment, which allowed the school to open quickly, reducing their initial startup costs. This enabled them to begin serving the local market immediately, and reach profitability instantaneously.

90 days
from introductory
call to school open

6 months
the number of
students doubled

The quoted data and opinions expressed in this case study were provided by the subject, in interviews conducted by Erdős Associates, an independent third-party firm. Unless otherwise indicated, all direct quotes are attributable to Edward Lunney, Director of School Growth at Higher Ground Education. The study was funded and published by Honduras Próspera, Inc.

HIGHER GROUND



Higher Ground Education is a U.S.-based company that operates Montessori schools across the United States, Europe, and Asia. They are the world's largest operator of Montessori schools. Prior to 2021, the company did not have a presence in Latin America. The company's expertise is adapting the Montessori model to local contexts and developing local real estate to serve their students. Upon learning about Próspera, Higher Ground began researching the jurisdiction as an option for expanding to the region.

After conducting some initial due diligence, Higher Ground saw the potential for Próspera to enable them to set up quickly and reach profitability faster than they could in most other places. Higher Ground scheduled a call with Próspera in early 2021 then made the decision to move forward with opening a school in the jurisdiction. Within 90 days of that initial call, Higher Ground opened the doors of Guidepost Montessori Roatán.



We estimate two years to open an international location, based on local regulations in both real estate and education codes. One current launch [in another location] is approaching year four without opening the school. Within 90 days we had an open school in Próspera.

REGULATORY FLEXIBILITY

Edward Lunney serves as Higher Ground Education's Director of School Growth. In this role, he oversees the launch and setup of new schools around the world. He was responsible with overseeing the setup of Guidepost Montessori Roatán for Higher Ground. According to Lunney, the biggest challenges for starting a new school are often associated with identifying a good location and complying with local regulations and licensing requirements. Most countries have specific requirements for educational frameworks, with additional requirements at the state and local levels. These requirements dictate not just how a school may operate, but the content that they teach, as well as the features of the school building. When launching a school in a new location, the company must first conduct a thorough review of federal, state, and local guidelines for the location, then adapt its curriculum to fit the specific requirements of that location. These challenges can be exacerbated when working in international jurisdictions, where guidelines can be unclear, government approvals can be slow, and language barriers serve to further complicate the process.

While Higher Ground has become highly adept at navigating the complex bureaucratic process of opening new schools in new locations, this process imposes significant up-front costs for the company. The process of receiving approval to open a new school can take years. Próspera's flexible regulatory environment enabled Higher Ground to bypass 100% of these government-imposed hurdles.

Because education is not a regulated industry in Próspera, Higher Ground was not required to obtain specific governmental permissions or permits to begin operation. Instead of spending months adapting their curriculum to comply with local rules, they were able to launch immediately and tailor their offerings to respond to feedback from students and parents. This enabled Higher Ground to realize significant cost savings and begin delivering educational services to students much more quickly than they could in other locations. This streamlined process not only benefitted the company, but also jumpstarted the education of their students, allowing the next generation of innovators and skilled workers to achieve success years sooner.

“

Education is an unregulated industry in Próspera, but we hold ourselves to the highest standards to ensure the children can properly transfer and interact in the international school system.

To some, the term “unregulated” might suggest a desire to provide the bare minimum level of services. However, this is not the case with Guidepost Montessori and other companies within Próspera. While the company was not required to comply with specific regulatory standards regarding the school’s infrastructure, they voluntarily chose to provide a curriculum and learning environment that meets the highest international standards for quality education. In effect, Próspera enabled Higher Ground to discard unhelpful regulations and voluntarily adopt the procedures that worked best for their students, tailoring their offerings to the local market. Because Guidepost Montessori is a private enterprise, the company had a tremendous incentive to provide high-quality services to attract students and parents.

Another challenge the company has faced in other locations is providing high-quality educational services that serve locals as well as international expat communities. Próspera’s regulatory flexibility allowed Higher Ground to better address the needs of these student profiles. With the freedom to rapidly iterate and improve their curriculum and offerings, the company was able to offer a product that better served the local families, teachers, and international populace of Roatán.



“

Education is an unregulated industry in Próspera, but we hold ourselves to the highest standards to ensure the children can properly transfer and interact in the international school system.

RAPID GROWTH

Because Higher Ground had no presence in Honduras or Latin America, the company had to work to build trust and promote the new school to families in Roatán. Because they were able to eliminate work associated with regulatory compliance, Lunney was able to spend that time meeting with local families, understanding their needs, and beginning to promote the new school.

Expanding to a new location can always present challenges associated with learning local cultural norms. Without having to focus on regulatory compliance, Lunney was able to more quickly scale these cultural barriers. Their efforts have proven hugely successful, as the school is realizing rapid growth. The next stage is expanding the class range to include middle school. Lunney attributes much of this growth to organic word-of-mouth, which the company was able to foster much more quickly than they could in other locations.

Guidepost Montessori Roatán’s first class in 2021 served 6 children. The next semester, the number of students doubled to 12. As of the Fall 2022 semester, the school is serving over 30 children, with a projected class size of 50 for 2023.

The freedom afforded by Próspera enabled Guidepost Montessori to start fast and scale rapidly. While this benefit can be significant for many industries, it is especially rewarding for Lunney, who sees firsthand the improved outcomes for children who now have access to higher-quality education.



“
We were basically profitable from day one.”

ACCELERATED TIMELINES, IMMEDIATE PROFITABILITY

Upfront and development costs can take time for companies to recover. When these costs are minimized, businesses can begin with a competitive advantage. This was the case for Higher Ground Education with the launch of Guidepost Montessori Roatán. The company was able to quickly deploy their highly refined business model and industry expertise, which allowed them to experience instant profitability. The company used Próspera’s talent network to immediately identify their first teacher and begin identifying future staff members. Because of the savings on upfront costs, the company is able to offer a rate of pay that exceeds local standards and allows them to continue growing their local team members. The financial indicators are stellar all around for Guidepost Montessori’s launch in Próspera.

Even though he still works on launches around the world, Lunney was so impressed with the local area and the Próspera community, he made the personal decision to moved to the island. Lunney enjoys not just the beautiful tropical location, but also being part of the growing Próspera community. He cites the innovative nature of the people and the businesses within Próspera as major benefits to living in Roatán, and the numerous opportunities for economic growth as new businesses are created to serve the needs of the growing population. Lunney has been impressed by quality of the local labor force and sees tremendous growth potential for service and support roles in Próspera.

The biggest challenge Lunney currently faces are logistics-related delays, which can impose difficulties when shipping materials from international locations. Shipping directly to Próspera is a great solution as it allows for easy importation of goods. Items that must be shipped to other ports of entry can be delayed, which Lunney says is typical for many Caribbean islands. Because Próspera has created a streamlined process for importation, Lunney anticipates that shipping timelines will continue to improve in the future.

Higher Ground Education’s experience in Próspera demonstrates that companies can realize rapid growth and profitability in Próspera while providing needed services to local and international customers.



PRÓSPERA 

1875 Connecticut Avenue
10th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20009

+1 (202) 991-0640

www.prospera.hn