



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

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Other Team Members:
Program: Greater Houston Area Program
Trip Dates: 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001 **Location Visited:** Israel
Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 01

Project Summary: Its very hard to feel connected to a certain culture or way of life when you have lived outside of it. You can learn a language in college, high school, and middle school. Until you are totally immersed into that language, it's hard to identify with the people who speak it. When I originally decided to write the grant for this fellowship, I thought that the experience would enrich my teaching methods, and make my instructional time more valuable to the students as well as me. It became so much more than that to me. It's very hard to teach a course and grow as an educator if you are the only educator teaching that course in the public school system. I realized that in order to grow as an educator I needed to immerse myself into the Hebrew language and Israeli culture. The best way to do that was to go to Israel. I found myself traveling to Kibbutz Ketura, which is in the middle of the Negev desert. I traveled there by myself, not knowing what I would find or if it would be useful to my classroom. Once I was there, it was amazing to see the change that occurred in my outlook of teaching. I have been thinking about it though. The whole point of our school is making it a community for our kids. I was living in the ultimate community. Everyone knew everyone else. It seemed like even though they did not like everyone in that community that they genuinely cared about each other. I think that in traveling to Israel by myself I identified and put myself more into my student's shoes. I started out in a place where I was not familiar with my surroundings. When I first got there, they gave me jobs that I was not familiar with. My first week there, I picked dates, cleaned hotel rooms and helped with the dining room. I woke up at five in the morning everyday excited to see what would be in store for me that day. I think that attitude is not unlike some of my student's attitudes. I know some days I did not want to get up and go to work, which is also probably also what my students feel on some days. I think the thought process that I would be able to put myself into someone else's shoes every time I woke up and breathed the air there inspired me during my fellowship.

Career Impact: Part of being a teacher is knowing deep down that you can fix any problem that comes to you within the classroom. You have to be self sufficient, reliable. Your students have to know they can come to you with a problem and trust you to fix it. In order to encourage your students to feel like they can be self sufficient, you yourself have to be self-sufficient. I wanted to venture outside of my comfort zone so that I could become stronger. I am the kind of person who likes to have everything planned out and organized. In the classroom setting you learn that not everything can go as planned, however on my Fund for Teacher trip I realized how to react when this occurs. I had many situations in which I needed to be calm, and find a solution. There is an aspect of life that is letting go and realizing that you cannot control everything that happens to you that I needed to learn. I think I learned this lesson on the trip. An obstacle I faced was definitely flying literally into the unknown. I did not know what living in the type of community I was living in would be like, nor was I prepared for it when it happened. On the kibbutz they had me performing many different odd jobs, jobs that had nothing to do with teaching. I think this experience has made me embrace other cultures and learning about other people's life experiences more. I think over all it has magnified my need to absorb and retain different facets of the learning experience. I think overall I have become a more patient person, someone who is more capable of listening to someone else's viewpoint. There were so many different cultures within the one community that I was living, much like a classroom. I think the experience of putting myself into this situation helped make my passion for learning grow. The experience of going somewhere and immersing yourself into someone else's culture really opens your eyes to how much learning you can actually accomplish. Every day had a new set of challenges and a new set of positive experiences. I took from those challenges and positive experiences and learned from those situations. Once you get used to learning so much every day and exchanging so much culture you get into the habit of learning and exchanging. Then once you get into that habit you want to continue that practice from then on. Living on a kibbutz you are given a new job every week, so you wake up everyday with the habit of learning something new that day. I think that because of this experience I have grown tremendously as a person. I have definitely become more patient, and more willing to look at other's perspectives. My instructional strategies have changed in that because I'm more patient now. The wait time I give students in between answering my questions is longer now, and I also prompt other students to be more patient when their peers are answering questions. When I facilitate classroom discussions I am more open to letting the discussion be lead by the students themselves, and do not feel that I have to add or provide as much direction. I am more comfortable speaking the language and it shows when I give directions or make conversation in Hebrew. Part of being an educator is providing a healthy and responsible role model for your students. When you are an educator in the middle school setting you also come across other challenges that are self-esteem based. If you present yourself as a strong individual than your students also model that behavior. Part of learning a language is feeling comfortable speaking in that language. Often insecurities prevent students from wanting to actively engage in learning the foreign language. Hopefully by modeling to the students that I am comfortable with myself, they will become more able to actively engage in learning Hebrew.

Classroom/Community Impact: I think that my Fund for Teacher's grant trip has definitely provided many artifacts and also stories to share with my students. I brought back a lot of materials from the kibbutz and also memories that will help convey the culture of Israel to my students. I definitely have a more sensitive outlook towards different learning styles within my classroom. I think when you broaden your horizons as far as living in a new culture you always gain a new level of credibility within your school community, because you represent yourself as someone who is not afraid to walk into a new culture or situation. If you are not afraid to walk into that kind of situation, than people will believe you to be an open minded individual. This open-minded attitude encourages parents and students alike to feel comfortable sharing their own perspectives on situations. My school community has always been very good at collaboration, however as an individual sometimes I was not as sensitive to another educator's point of view as I should have been. Now I am going to make a conscious effort to open the flow of communication between my peers and myself. This newfound open-minded behavior definitely is a positive outcome of my trip. As an educator you are always trying (at least I am) to promote understanding on some level. I can now model this behavior more completely for my students.

Open Response: There are no current projects at my school that are utilizing my grant opportunity however there are some projects that I would like to start in the next year or two based on the experiences I have had through my grant. I would like to organize an innerfaith/innercultural exchange between my students and other students from another culture/religion. I think either a "day of learning" or maybe a fun project for both groups would be beneficial in bridging the gaps between the Israeli and Arab cultures. Not all of my students are Jewish, nor are they all from an Israeli background, however most of them could still benefit from an exchange of cultures. I will be presenting a slide show to my students based on my fellowship trip. The slide show will have three themes, and the students can pick a theme to then research and present on. I am sure throughout the year, as I take time to reflect on this amazing opportunity I have been given that I will develop more ways to use the fellowship in my classroom.

Quote: Mind full of questions and a teacher in soul.

Photos:



Negev Desert



Ketura bus stop



highway on the way to tel aviv



sunset on the beach in Tel Aviv



Ketura



Gulf Of Aquaba



Jaffo/Tel Aviv



Tel Aviv