



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Ecuador-Language, Culture and Nature Study on the Equator

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Other Team Members:

Program: Oakland Program

Trip Dates: 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001

Location Visited: Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands

Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 02

Project Summary: During the summer of 2008 I embarked on an independent professional development journey to the diverse country of Ecuador. One of my intentions was to increase my Spanish language fluency through an extended stay in a Spanish speaking country. Another goal was to observe the natural and cultural environment of this country ecologists have labeled one of the world's "megadiversity hotspots." My inspiration while on the fellowship came from bearing witness to unique natural phenomena at very close range both on the mainland and on the Galapagos Islands. The animals i saw included giant tortoises, blue footed boobies, anacondas, caymans, breaching whales, river dolphins, social spiders and many more. It was equally inspiring to learn about and enjoy Afro-Ecuadorian music and dance traditions in addition to the beliefs and history of indigenous peoples of the Andes and Amazon. I sampled, for the first time a wide array of cuisine featuring many variations on the whole foods of corn, yucca and quinoa. I learned of the environmental impacts that are negatively affecting all regions in country and found hope and inspiration in an environmental school that teaches children about sustainability and reforestation. The Galapagos islands inspired me to think differently about the world. I know that a world based on mutual cooperation as modeled by the animals that inhabit the islands is possible. Through education we can transform our way of relating to one another, other beings and the earth so that balance can be re-established. All that diversity in a tiny nation the size of the state of Nevada kept the spirit of adventure alive in me during my trip.

Career Impact: I was able to test my limits while on this fellowship in a variety of ways. Many of my challenges were of the physical type, such as when I climbed Vocan Cotopaxi (5897 m), a volcano said to be the furthest point from the center of the earth and the closest to the sun. As I made my way up that mountain, slowly so as not to lose my breath to the high altitude, many doubts and fears entered my thoughts and questions. These were metaphors for life from which I learned a great deal. I am eager to share this lesson in stretching oneself in order to break through perceived limitations with my students. I was able to overcome my fear of being in a wide-open ocean with large animals such as sharks, bull sea lions and scary ancient marine iguanas. My students will see from this experience how growth occurs when we do things that we are afraid of. Travel has always been a means of personal growth for me and I hope to convey this spirit of learning to my students by sharing my most recent experience in Ecuador.

As a result of my facing my fears i have many pictures to share with students in science class that will enliven the scripted curriculum. I learned about sustainability at a coastal organic farm and the power of environmental education when it is integrated into the economic success of a community. I will be able to drive home the importance of conservation of non-renewable resources when I show the pictures of the oil pipeline that runs into the Amazon Jungle and has altered the ecosystem of that region.

Classroom/Community Impact:The students at my dual language school will benefit from my fellowship in a clear and varied manner. My improved language skills will facilitate with home communication which will build community. The mission of the new small school for which I work is to inspire a sense of world citizenship facilitated by educating students to become completely bilingual and academically successful. By demonstrating my commitment to improve my second language skills I will inspire children who struggle in English Language Development to persist in their efforts at acquiring a second language. They will get to see their teacher learning many things including dances, language and traditions when i present my slide show.

After feeling frustrated in my Spanish classes by the teacher focused pedagogical style being used, I realize that I too must make adjustments to my lessons and as a result I will be teaching more student focused lessons. I witnessed the benefits of hands on experiential learning through my fellowship and would like to incorporate more field trips to provide my students with similar opportunities.

As my students get excited to see the maps, souvenirs and pictures I have brought back from my fellowship a seed of international exploration will be planted in them. The delight on their faces and the beautiful free movements they make when they hear the marimba CD I play for them is a clear example of this. Through sharing my fellowship experience I will inspire my students to explore the world beyond their neighborhood and see that learning can be real life applicable and fun.

Open Response: I have shared the pictures from my fellowship with many of my peers and plan to do a formal slide show at one of our in-service meetings. I will utilize our recently acquired new technology, the Elmo and LCD projector in showing my underwater pictures during science class. Grade level colleagues and I have discussed teaming up for such a presentation. We have also decided

to focus on teaching world geography from the very beginning of the year and will be using personal travel experiences and artifacts to illustrate the somewhat difficult concepts of continents, countries and cities. My students are already excited about performing a traditional Afro Ecuadorian marimba dance at the talent show this year. Former students who were aware of my fellowship award will be able to see a presentation of the experience as I do guest teacher lessons in their classrooms. Last year they learned about the four Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle and rot) so it will delight them to see children from another country learning sustainable agriculture practices in school. We plan to establish pen pals with the Rio Muchacho Environmental School that I visited. Many more exciting opportunities will arise as the year progresses.

Quote: My experience in Ecuador this summer has provided me with the creative resources and inspiration to bring integrated curriculum alive to my students.

Photos:



Observing the fauna and flora on the Amazon river in Cuyabeno national park, Oriente Region, Ecuador



Biogas tank at the Rio Muchacho Organic Farm, Manabi Ecuador



Getting ready to make chocolate from fruit to the bowl.



School visit to the Rio Muchacho Environmental School



Observing the youth rehearse a traditional Afro-Ecuadorian Bomba dance.



Turtle hatchling makes it way safely to the water.



The giant tortoises that the Galapagos Islands get their name from.



Ecuadorian child plays traditional game "sapo" with a friend in an urban nature preserve in Quito, Ecuador.