



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** Finding Connections through Art and Language  
**Name:** Susanna Morgan

**Other Team Members:** Kristin Closek

**Program:** San Francisco Program

**Trip Dates:** 06/30/2011 - 07/28/2011  
**Location Visited:** Oaxaca , Mexico

**Post Fellowship Reporting Template:** PFR Template 01

**Project Summary:** We are art teachers at five elementary schools in San Francisco and interact with hundreds of students each week, many of whom are English language learners. For several years we have been seeing a shift from instruction taught primarily in English, to a bilingual model taught in Spanish and English. As art teachers who have a passion for bringing highly engaging art experiences to our students, we felt compelled to take an active role in this shift. We chose to travel to Oaxaca to learn Spanish, explore the rich culture, and study the traditional folk art of the region. We were inspired to go to Oaxaca, because of the regions rich cultural history and the multifaceted arts community. During our weeks in Oaxaca, we traveled to nearby towns known for their crafts, took Spanish classes five days a week, collected art examples and took workshops on how to make alebrijes, wooden creatures with elaborate designs. One of our most inspiring days was when we took a tour to San Martin Tiljacate to visit a local artisan family who specializes in making alebrijes. They allowed us to experience the entire process from carving the copal wood, to mixing the natural dyes, and finally watching the artists intricately paint the alebrijes with Zapotec designs. Spending over three weeks in Oaxaca also allowed us to fully immerse ourselves in the culture and practice our new Spanish skills. Our fellowship has given us the ability to interact more fully with our English Language learners and bring new art experiences to our classrooms.

**Career Impact:** \*Allowed us to acquire Spanish language skills that we did not have before.

\*Inspired us to continue to take Spanish classes when we returned home.

\*The art of Oaxaca inspired us create new innovative lessons and gain a deeper knowledge of the artists who make it.

\*Helped us empathize with the challenges of communicating in a country with a different language.

\*Gave us many hands on art experiences and examples to show our students.

**Classroom/Community Impact:**\*Students will be learning how to create Black pottery and Alebrijes.

\*Students will be exposed to the history and processes of making traditional Oaxacan crafts.

\*We are more equipped to communicate and give directions to our students who primarily speak Spanish.

\*We are sharing our experiences with our colleagues and collaborating on projects that reflect Mexican culture.

**Open Response:** \*Planning a comprehensive unit on the art and culture of Oaxaca

\*Taking Spanish classes to further our language skills.

\*Planning future trips to other parts of Mexico to gain more cultural experiences.

\*Developing a presentation about our fellowship to share with other teachers.

\*Planning a student art show that reflects students interpretations of Oaxacan crafts.

**Quote:** Being immersed in a new culture opened a window to thinking outside the box and seeing the world in a whole new way.

Photos:



Kristin on top of the ruins at Monte Alban!



Visiting the widest tree in the world at El Tule!



Susanna hanging out with our teachers at the Alebrije workshop!



Visiting the Black Pottery studio of Dona Rosa



Kristin trying traditional Oaxacan Mole!



Watching an artist mix natural dyes for painting Alebrijes





Local artist weaving on a busy Oaxaca street!



Susanna standing in front of unfinished Alebrijes!