



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** A Walk IN The Rain Forest **Name:** Mary Westland, Judith Locicero and Anna Hadgis

**Other Team Members:**

**Program:** EL Education Program

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

**Location Visited:** Costa Rica

**Post Fellowship Reporting Template:** PFR Template 02

**Project Summary:** We traveled to Costa Rica to attend the World Conference on Reading that focused on reading in a diverse world. We enhanced our knowledge of literacy, expanded our scope of understanding regarding the issues affecting our youth. Our goals in attending the International Reading World Congress were to learn about issues pertaining to literacy worldwide, while gaining an understanding of the environment, culture and history of Costa Rica.

As a result of our travels to Costa Rica we are able to design interdisciplinary units of study that include literacy, bio-diversity, ecology, science, environmental literacy and sociology. These units have begun to enhance our in depth investigations and expeditions. We established global connections with professionals from around the world and local connections with Costa Rican natives from every walk of life. We became more culturally sensitive to the mores, traditions and cultural ramifications of a society that has been totally focused on promoting literacy and environmental consciousness.

**Career Impact:** The experience was not only enlightening and intellectually stimulating but it also was affirming. Our urban charter school, like many schools around the world, is challenged by students who are economically disadvantaged and who struggle to read due to a lack of vocabulary, insufficient phonemic awareness, and a lack of phonics and decoding skills. By attending the international conference on reading, we enhanced our knowledge of literacy, expanded our understanding of these issues that affect our students. By meeting and engaging in discussions with professionals from around the world. we increased our understanding of how to differentiate instruction in our classrooms by exploring instructional practices in Costa Rica and other countries to learn how the needs of underachieving students are addressed. We learned about best practices for increasing comprehension and retention of content in literature and other disciplines and are incorporating these practices into our expeditions.

Two of our team members experienced the Rain Forest for the very first time and pushed themselves to new physical limits. The three day excursion into the rain and cloud forests, the Arenal Volcano National Park and Monteverde Cloud Forest, allowed us to document and photograph the eco-systems that are researched and studied in our science curriculum.

**Classroom/Community Impact:**The creation of an interdisciplinary curriculum with an emphasis on exploration, encounter and allophilia can only help our students as they confront the diversity of our city. The development of tolerance and understanding and an awareness of the larger world around us will aid our school in becoming a greater asset to our community. The integration of character development into all aspects of our interdisciplinary curriculum and expeditions teaches our students to bring solutions to the problems in their world. Our fieldwork to Costa Rica provided the basis for posing guiding questions to our students focused around investigations into an ecosystem susceptible to negative effects from global warming and increased emissions of carbon dioxide into our atmosphere. The dramatic examples of Costa Rica's plentiful species and conservation efforts makes the potential for habitat loss and ecological disaster far more real. Focusing student attention on this richly varied world inside an Expedition is certain to spark their interest in the environmental issues facing our society.

**Open Response:** Our experiences are forming the basis of a fifth grade expedition on "Am I Responsible for the Wild Weather"? Students will study a variety of ecosystems and how balance is maintained. They also will investigate how human activity often threatens that balance. A portion of the study focuses on balancing economic development with environmental protection. Special focus will be placed on the need for and existence of wildlife refuge centers and protected national parks. Our learning experiences, photos, journal entries and video logs will be used in this expedition.

Our school is designed around a set of principles that reflect our philosophy of interdependence and responsibility to ourselves and to our world. Students are encouraged to understand their relationship and responsibility to respect the natural world and become stewards of our Earth and of future generations. Service opportunities encourage students to put their responsibility into action. We will pursue a service project to help support the Children's Eternal Rain Forest and will incorporate that into our fifth grade expedition

that investigates the relationship of ecosystems.

**Quote:** Being immersed in the Rain and Cloud Forests of Costa Rica made us keenly aware of the fragile balance of ecology and the interrelatedness of our diverse world.

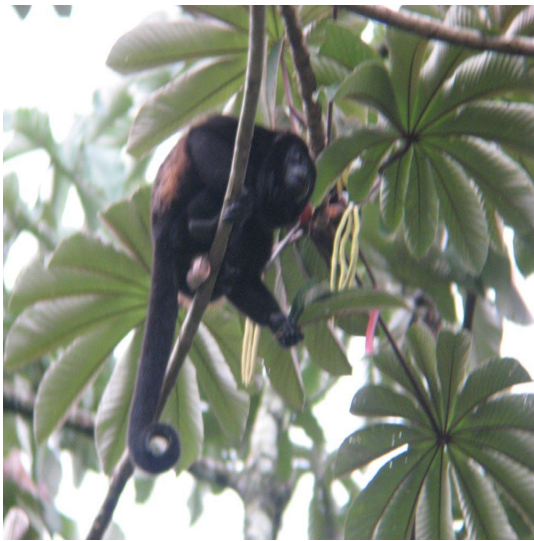
Photos:



Boat ride across Arenal Lake to the Monteverde Cloud Forest



Mary, Anna and Judi deep in the rain forest of Costa Rica



Howler Monkey



Our guide Pedro explains the flora and fauna of the rain forest



Our team enjoys a scrumptious lunch as we ascend to the Cloud Forest



In an effort to go carbon free by the year 2020, Costa Rica plants a million trees each year



Our guide, Jairo demonstrates how the sticky fig blossom entices the Holler Monkey to eat ravenously. The seeds are then spread throughout the Cloud Forest as the result of the digestive process of the Holler Monkey



Costa Rican plantation owner oversees the harvesting of the coffee crop