



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** Capoeira for the Body, Mind and Spirit      **Name:** Maria Vaughan  
**Other Team Members:**  
**Program:** EL Education Program  
**Trip Dates:** 08/05/2012 - 08/25/2012      **Location Visited:** Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
**Post Fellowship Reporting Template:** PFR Template 02

**Project Summary:** CAPOEIRA is an Afro-Brazilian martial art that incorporates acrobatics, dance, percussion, and songs in a rhythmic dialogue of body, mind, and spirit. It is marked by deft, tricky movements often played on the ground or completely inverted. The players or capoeiristas demonstrate their agility, strength, reflexes, and coordination by dancing/playing with each other to the rhythms of the capoeira music.

### Body

This summer, Fund for Teachers provided me the amazing opportunity to travel to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to study capoeira with the goals of improving flexibility and strength in my students and help students take an analytical look at their own perceptions, attitudes and practices toward health. I want my students to feel a part of a crew no matter the athletic ability. Some exercises are done as a group (rodas, clapping, music), in pairs (counterbalance, attack and defense), or independently to master a trick or personal goal. Capoeira provides built in differentiation while increasing flexibility and meeting state standards of cardio, strength, gymnastics, and rhythm.

### Mind

As a Physical Education coach at an Expeditionary Learning School, I am always looking for ways to connect movement with the core classroom expeditions. Capoeira provides a means to make connections to multiple grades core expeditions. This experience allowed me to make authentic connections to culture, healthy lifestyles, fitness, history, slavery, and oppression. It also opens the window on discussions for self-respect and personal social responsibility.

### Spirit

I'm attracted to capoeira not only for its allure, but because it provides an approach that focuses on creating positive experiences for all students in PE, not just those who excel at traditional athletics. I hope sharing this experience will encourage them to find an activity that inspires them to engage in lifelong activities that improve fitness, health and well-being. As capoeira grows, people all over the world are expressing how important it is in their lives. Monica Rector might as well be speaking for me when she said "Capoeira is a way of living that in addition to its physical benefits of practice, has given me a clearer vision and better perspective on the game of life, and a better strategy to face the contradictions of the world." (Almeida 1981, p. 17)

**Career Impact:** The first challenge was coordinating travel plans and program dates with overseas facilitators. Once booked, the program was changed from 12 hours of capoeira a week to 4. This meant my main project would consist of only 8 hours of training- hardly worth traveling for and not enough skill experience to bring back home. My fellow team member was unable to attend at the last minute adding the challenge of traveling alone. Despite several setbacks, I learned that when you want something bad enough, you find a way to get it done and so I did. Persistence paid off when my Maestro invited me to assist him in teaching elementary students. My 4 hours per week quickly turned into 24. I was able to pick up teaching techniques and games that will make learning skills fun for my students. During my "off" time, I participated in 26 hours of Brazilian dance classes, toured local points of interest, volunteered at an orphanage, explored how locals lived healthy lifestyles, hiked in the Tijuca forest, shopped for artifacts and instruments and renewed my soul at local beaches. Time for solitude and reflection helps me return to my gym refreshed and ready to face the new year with confidence.

**Classroom/Community Impact:\*** Students will understand the interrelationship between history, culture, games, sports, play, tumbling and dance.

\* All my classes were in Portuguese forcing me to rely on observation skills and background knowledge. It reminds me to be sure my ESL students have a clear line of vision during instructions.

\* Crew Collaboration has become extremely important with fellow coaches and academic teachers to make appropriate expedition connections.

\* I was designated team leader over all Connections (Specials) classes.

\* Introduce Brazilian culture by teaching words, counting, stories and philosophy of Capoeira.

\* The student will understand how and why one moves in a variety of situations and will use this information to enhance his or her

skills and apply to other activities.

\* Provide a possible after school capoeira club and/ or connections to community resources.

**Open Response:** \* Service and compassion: "What makes me Healthy?" Kindergarten project in which students will fill shoeboxes with items such as jump ropes and toothbrushes that make them healthy to send to an orphanage in Rio.

\* Students will demonstrate their new skills and confidence by performing for their family and friends in a community circle or showcase event.

\* Develop a two month multi-grade level appropriate capoeira curriculum.

\* Continue instruction for instruments and learn songs in Portuguese to make the learning experience more authentic for students.

\* Update blog and webpage with photos, videos and information regarding my Fund For Teachers experience.

\* Discuss opportunities for an afterschool capoeira club or summer camp.

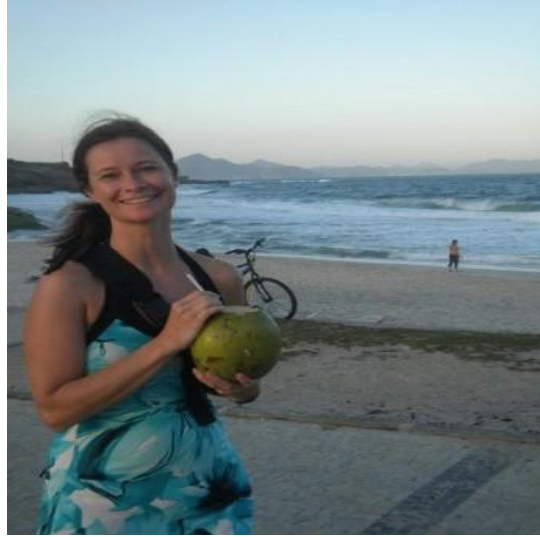
\* Look for opportunities to present at a conference or teacher workshop.

**Quote:** "Capoeira is a way of living that in addition to its physical benefits of practice, has given me a clearer vision and better perspective on the game of life, and a better strategy to face the contradictions of the world."

Photos:



Drawing "What makes me healthy?" pictures at the orphanage.



Natural World: Refreshing my body (coconut milk) and spirit (ocean)



Expert visitors demonstrating for my middle school students



Maria assisting with one of several elementary capoeira classes.



My first day of adult classes (in blue).



Using technology to translate during music classes.



Building arm strength for inverted moves



Learning the "parafuso", an airborne cartwheel with a spinning kick