



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Para Italia **Name:** Clare Billingham
Other Team Members:
Program: Chicago Program
Trip Dates: 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001 **Location Visited:** Italy
Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 01

Project Summary: Final Report: The first part of our Italian journey was spent in the town of Reggio Emilia where we observed their world famous Early Childhood Education Program. Our initial investigation of the program had led to the discovery of many similarities to our own individual approaches to teaching. Since we are a second language teacher and a teacher of children with Autism, we agreed with educators in Reggio that:

1. A child must have some control over the direction of their learning;
2. S/he must be able to learn through experiences of touching, moving, listening, seeing, and hearing;
3. Children must be allowed to explore the relationships that they have with other children and with material items in the world; and
4. They must have a variety of ways to express themselves, as communication is fundamental to learning.

We were anxious to discover just how their philosophy might be adapted to our own programs.

Our days in Reggio were filled with fascinating learning experiences. Most mornings we attended our Italian language class. Afternoons were devoted to observation and discussion. We observed one Reggio pre school program that was still in session over the summer. Here we found answers to the everyday practical problems inherent in implementation of the program. We watched children work independently and in small groups to devise and build homes for the moles that they had been reading about. We joined other teachers and principals for discussion about common problems and learned from their innovative solutions. At an exploration center available to children and their teachers from all over the city, we saw adults working to build centers for exploration of the senses, light, sound, etc. Examples of the children's self expression could be seen in model houses, photographs, and even life size furniture. We joined other teachers and principals for discussion about common problems and learned from their innovative solutions. On another occasion a leader in the field presented reflections on her own work. The experiences she shared led to the development of our own model lesson plan, which will be the basis for all our future lessons.

Our last week was a whirlwind tour of Florence, Venice, and Rome. Unfortunately, the great weather that we were blessed with in Reggio did not last. We braved intense humidity and temperatures well above 100 – small sacrifice when compared to the magnificence of the churches of Florence and her beautiful hills. Floating down the streets of Venice was an experience never to be forgotten. We enjoyed dinner with charming waiters in a café just off the water and visited nearby islands to find hand made lace and blown glass treasures. But, Rome was my personal favorite. We explored the colosseum and imagined the suffering that took place there so long ago. We viewed ancient architecture and marveled at the capabilities of the Romans. On our final day we attended a Latin Mass at St. Peter's Cathedral. I will never forget the moment.

Career Impact: *Participated in an Italian language class in order to experience personally learning a language under pressure.

*Spent time in another culture to better understand what our students are going through

*Observed The Reggio Emilia Program and spoke with teachers there to learn practical solutions to everyday problems with implementation

*Created new curriculum

Classroom/Community Impact:*Students will benefit from our new understanding of what it means to live within a new culture

*Students will benefit from the expertise shared by teachers already using the program.

*Students will gain in compassion for children whose learning styles are a little "different"

*New curriculum created - new learning experiences presented to children

Open Response: *Several lesson plans for experience activities with involvement of all senses

*Interdisciplinary curriculum for inclusion of children with Autism in Bilingual/Mainstream programs

Quote: "You may have the universe if I may have Italy." Giuseppe Verdi

Photos:



Sidewalk Artist in Florence



Gondola Travel in Venice



In Italy coffee is an adventure!!



The Coliseum of Rome



Close up of the Trevi Fountain, Rome



Graffiti is everywhere!



Children on vacation in Reggio Emilia



One of Venezia's Beautiful Waterways