



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Celebrate Yourself! Making your Life More Meaningful Through Yoga and Art. **Name:** Cynthia Brown

Other Team Members:

Program: Oklahoma Program

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

Location Visited: OKLAHOMA

Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 01

Project Summary: The Berkshire Mountains near Stockbridge Massachusetts envelop Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health. For more than 30 years, Kripalu has been teaching skills for optimal living through experiential education for the whole person: body, mind, and spirit. I chose to attend the month long, 200 hour yoga teacher training intensive to attain my yoga teacher certification. Everything at Kripalu is designed to support you in living an integrated and fulfilling life. I needed this enriching and inspiring experience to reconnect to who I really am and to gain strength to go back to my daily life.

My proposal was inspired by my passion for yoga, health, and art. For several years I have been incorporating breath and movement into my high school art classes. The students love doing yoga and the breathing exercises help them focus, energize their brains, and feel refreshed. My concern for my students' health also led me to write this proposal.

I was inspired by the daily 6:30 AM yoga classes, the natural organic food, the silent breakfasts, walks through the forest by the stream, the Sanskrit chanting, the vigorous practice of sometimes 5 hours of yoga per day, the lack of any technology including radio and television. I was also inspired by my 55 classmates from all over the world who were there to study with me. It was truly amazing!

Career Impact: I was personally challenged by practicing yoga several hours each day. Being on my yoga mat each and every morning at 6:30 AM took some getting used to but it was such a peaceful way to begin each day. We had two exams to pass that included all Sanskrit names for the postures as well as the Yamas and the Niyamas which are practices for living a pure life such as, ahimsa, to avoid all forms of violence, aparigraha, non-attachment to material possessions, non-greed, Brahmacharya which is practicing moderation, Satya which is refraining from deception and dishonesty, Santosha is to practice contentment, and so on. We practiced these precepts and also had to learn all about them, as well as the Sanskrit names. Another challenge was practicing meditation and attempting to stay in the moment. To "be here now" is simple and profound.

Every morning we chanted our prayers in Sanskrit, we sat on the floor for all of our classes. Classes were from 6:30 AM until often 9:00 PM. I stayed in a dorm with 23 other women and lights must be out by 9:30 PM. Other challenges were taking anatomy classes, teaching three of my own classes to this group of yoga teachers from around the globe. I also learned how to lead postures and to adjust students' postures as well as how to teach partner yoga. All of this gave me new skills to teach to my students. My instructional strategies have changed in that I begin all of my art classes with breathing exercises, (pranayama) and stretching. I have wonderful stories to tell my students I bring more authentic experiences to my classroom by integrating nonjudgmental awareness and creative sequencing into my art classes.

Classroom/Community Impact: Benefits for myself are numerous. I am more patient and tolerant. I'm less judgmental and I try always to be kind and fair. I feel better mentally, emotionally, and physically which in turn benefits my students. My attitude is positive and I feel I have a sunnier disposition. Of course this is a huge benefit for the kids! The students and school community benefit because I incorporate breath and movement into all of my art classes. The kids have learned to coordinate their breath with brush strokes in painting. They have learned about symmetrical balance by drawing with both hands and coordinating the breath with these movements. Second and fourth semesters at my alternative high school, I will be teaching a yoga class and I already have more students enrolled in the class than I have yoga mats! I have taught yoga to our Physical Education class several times and I have an inhouse workshop planned in October for our teachers.

I believe yoga allows for inner stillness and helps keep us calm amidst adverse life circumstances. I have always taught life skills in my art classes such as patience, courage, honesty, kindness, and truth. I believe teaching the kids yoga and breathing gives them skills for coping with life and for leading a richer life.

Open Response: *30 ft. X 10 ft. handmade tile mosaic wall. The wall integrates life skills words, positive quotes, and imagery.

*Journal entries, paintings based on calming and centering breath and movement.

*Yoga classes offered 2nd and 4th semesters

*Developing positive, "can do" attitudes and personal authenticity

Quote: My trip to Kripalu allowed me to reconnect to who I really am and to gain strength to go back to my daily life and be a better teacher. Thank you!

Photos:



KRIPALU YOGA PICTURE IN CLASS



