



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** A Journey in Cuba's Educational System    **Name:** Aileen Chang  
**Other Team Members:** Miquila Alejandre  
**Program:**  
**Trip Dates:** 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001    **Location Visited:** Cuba  
**Post Fellowship Reporting Template:** PFR Template 02

**Project Summary:** The stark contrast between the wealth of the United States and Cuba along with the counter-intuitive contrast in their respective qualities of education begged us, two middle school math teachers in a high-needs urban school, to glean pearls of wisdom from this Fund for Teachers sponsored trip.

We toured schools, heard from panels of educators, interviewed teachers, observed children, listened to professors of pedagogy, and examined textbooks. The first obvious difference between the two countries is the sense of community. We visited teachers whose houses included crumbling facades, broken toilets, and shoddy construction, yet they always more than willingly shared their space, food, and time with us as if we were family, heartening and inspiring us.

There is strong national government support for education. Teachers received teaching-specific training for 6 years, middle school class sizes were limited to 15, all parents met with teachers monthly, students looped with teachers at least from kindergarten to 4th grade, principals were chosen to be mentors based on classroom performance, and pre-school programs included parents being shown how to teach their children. The nationalized curriculum was impressive, with algebraic concepts first introduced in 1st grade.. There are clear implications for us if we want to improve education in the U.S.

**Career Impact:** Our adventures in Cuba:

- Helped us to believe that there are concrete ways to help ALL student succeed
- Excited us about the possibility of accelerating student achievement by making key curricular changes
- Made us realize the importance of creating an inter-dependent, supportive classroom community
- Showed us the benefits and beauty of inter-cultural interactions
- Gave us an appreciation for the wealth of resources in the U.S.
- Are something to share with our students and fellow teachers to broaden their horizons

**Classroom/Community Impact:** • New understanding of the types of system-wide changes necessary to improve our educational system

- Procedures and structures designed to create a true classroom community
- Change in curricula to spiral algebra concepts in earlier
- Increased emphasis of cooperative learning, discovery learning, and other math-specific strategies
- Development of strategies to integrate notes into student learning process
- Presentations to the school community and district-wide math community

**Open Response:** • Currently developing presentations for school and district

- Changes in procedures and structures within our school are being discussed
- Curricula and lesson plans being modified on an ongoing basis to be more vertically-aligned and to incorporate algebra in earlier grades and to be scripted so as to aide in exchanging lesson plans
- <http://fundforteachersadventureincuba.blogspot.com/>

**Quote:** "Where else in the world guarantees that the poorest of the poor, including the beggar on the street, will receive a free education all the way through the doctoral level along with free healthcare?" - Aileen

## Photos:

With a tour group from Global Exchange, Berkeley, CA.

A tour of Las Terrazas Sustainable Community.

Researching math textbooks in Vinales.

The Educa Su Hijo Pre-School Program.

Observing a 2nd grade classroom in Havana.

Interviewing Marta Elena, an exceptional 2nd grade teacher.

Working away in a casa particular (equivalent to a hostel).

A 4th grade math textbook.