



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** Avanti Italia: Creative Tools to Expand Learning Experiences  
**Name:** Jack Degelia

**Other Team Members:** Cathy Huvar

**Program:** Greater Houston Area Program

**Trip Dates:** 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001  
**Location Visited:** Florence, Italy

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

**Project Summary:** Florence, Italy is the home of history's most creative minds: Michelangelo, Da Vinci, and Botticelli. What better place to stretch our creative muscles? We attended the Creativity Workshop in an effort to expand our creativity through guided visualization technique, automatic drawing and writing, map making, memoir, and storytelling.

As teachers our creativity is challenged daily by students' need for more inventive and "out-of-the-box" teaching and learning methods. How do we engage students and keep them interested and focused on the excitement of learning new and wonderful things? There are a lot of programs that teach techniques of creative expression, but very little that focus on the creative process itself. Students have an innate curiosity and desire to explore their creative abilities. We wanted to learn how to teach students to recognize and trust their imagination's instincts, trust their creative process, combat their debilitating self-criticism and the fear of failure that leads to creative blocks. The workshop focused on methods to open up new and unconventional means of creating and learning together in many exercises. Although the methods seemed a bit simplistic at first, what we discovered was that the culmination of all of the exercises opened up so much more than we had hoped.

The ideas for new methods of teaching students to reveal their deeper understanding of any subject matter just came flooding out over the course of the conference. We were able to create lesson plans across curricula easily, and we both are so anxious to return to the classroom and share this with our students and colleagues!

**Career Impact:** The challenge we both faced was our closed imagination. We discovered that we became stifled at the simplicity of the exercises. Much like our students, we had a great deal of fear and personal doubt in our ability to accomplish the most basic exercise. We had to overcome the fear of beginning and understand that there are no wrong answers, in fact, no answers at all. Once we started to break down our own barriers, the work just exploded. We were able to take a very simple exercise and create some truly marvelous things. There were moments of creating that produced material that made us all laugh out loud and cry openly. It was freeing and amazing to realize we could create these things that we didn't know were inside of us!

**Classroom/Community Impact:** The influence this experience will have on our classrooms is very exciting. We can now create cross-curricular lesson plans with all core curriculum faculty much more easily. We can engage the students on a much more individual basis through these creative methods. Our approach to how we teach certain aspects of the curriculum has already seen changes. Since the creative process has no right or wrong answers, the students feel much freer to openly express their understanding of subjects, their personal views, share their thoughts, accept new viewpoints, and broaden their knowledge of more than just the subject matter. They will create a student who isn't afraid to explore learning! We are poised for enriching our students, classrooms and teachers as we explore new uses for old tools and the experimentation of new tools in an old curriculum.

**Open Response:** We will be presenting our information to our respective campuses during our teacher training sessions at the beginning of the school year. We hope to be able to present them to a wider audience at the semester break. We are exploring publishing some of the work we did in the workshop as flash fiction, and have already begun to lay the blueprint for a teacher's creativity workbook. The methods we plan to use will provide our students with the ability and opportunity to express their work at various times throughout the year in a variety of venues. We are very, very excited about these opportunities!

**Quote:** We have been using the same tools for so long that we now mistake them for answers. They are not answers. They are simply tools. We need to use these tools in new, different ways to create better solutions and higher goals.

Photos:



Our first day at the Creativity Workshop in Florence, Italy



Day trip to Pisa to gather material for the workshop



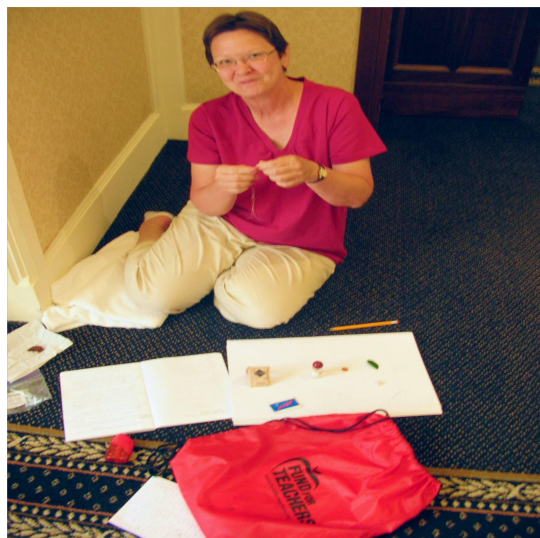
On our way to the workshop advertising Fund for Teachers!



Flash fiction writing - very freeing and creative!



The Creativity Workshop in action! Shhhh! We're creating!!!



Cathy being creative! We worked a lot on the floor!!!



Tools of the Creativity Workshop - the hands of creativity!



Florence, Italy - our creative inspiration!!