



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** Aussie Autism Adventures      **Name:** Amy B. Dufrene  
**Other Team Members:**  
**Program:** Greater Houston Area Program  
**Trip Dates:** 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001      **Location Visited:** Brisbane, Cairns and Sydney, Australia  
**Post Fellowship Reporting Template:** PFR Template 01

**Project Summary:** Much like the wonders of Oz, Autism presents parents, family members, friends, and teachers with mystifying questions and the most challenging puzzles to solve. As the incidence of Autism rises to 1 in 150, the search for keys to unlock these mysteries becomes ever more important to families and to those of us in the teaching profession. Through our fellowship, our search for answers has taken us to Australia, also known as Oz, to seek guidance from one of the world's leading experts in the field of Autism, Dr. Tony Attwood. Dr. Attwood presented the most awe inspiring information over a 2 day conference near Sydney, AU. Setting aside time for the "two American ladies", we were able to identify vital areas where our newly learned information can best be applied in our schools.

Visiting Cairns, AU we were greeted with true Aussie style once again, as we consulted with private and public school personnel to compare the level of services offered there with those offered in our district.

Our travels also took us to Brisbane, AU to visit Dr. Michelle Garnett's Hearts and Minds Asperger and Autism Clinic where we had the unbelievable experience of observing therapy sessions as well as having one on one consultations with clinical psychologists. This clinic is an extremely rare gem in the area of services available to children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. The combination of Dr. Attwood's presentation and the opportunity to visit his colleague's clinic have proven to be the most influential experiences either of us have yet to discover. The level of understanding and the insight into the world of Autism that we have gained through this fellowship is at first overwhelming, but absolutely priceless to us on professional and personal levels.

**Career Impact:** \* Gained a new understanding of the struggles students with autism face on a daily basis

- \* Learned ways to ensure the successful inclusion of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Asperger's Syndrome into the general education class setting
- \* Consulted with clinical psychologists at the Minds and Hearts Clinic learning valuable techniques in teaching social skills to students with Autism Spectrum disorder
- \* Participated in a two day conference with Dr. Tony Attwood where we gained insightful knowledge about Autism, as well as best practices when teaching social skills groups
- \* Compared practices and services offered in US and AU during consultations with teachers in Cairns, AU

**Classroom/Community Impact:**\* Created new format for social skills training within our school by adding one on one training sessions for students in need

- \* Acquired new teaching tools to present information on understanding one's feelings and emotions
- \* Gaining a new understanding of the struggles students with autism face and why they face these struggles will allow us to better communicate with parents and students
- \* Students within the school community will be taught tolerance of indifference through recommended strategies and children's books on this subject

**Open Response:** \* Developing in-services with the use of power point for faculty and staff on understanding autism and dealing with potential bullying situations which negatively impact the student with autism as well as their peers

- \* Structuring of social skills groups and individual sessions are being scheduled within the students' regular school day
- \* Continued research and inquiry using newly acquired books and other recommendations made by Dr. Attwood and his colleagues
- \* Planning district level in-service on information gained from fellowship to be presented to other teachers of students with disabilities

**Quote:** "The level of understanding and the insight into the world of Autism that we have gained through this fellowship is at first overwhelming, but absolutely priceless to us on professional and personal levels." Amy Dufrene and Leigh Childs, June 2008

Photos:



Amy and Leigh with renowned author and presenter, Dr. Tony Attwood.



Private High School in Cairns, Australia.



One of Australia's many beautiful beaches.



The amazing Sydney Opera House.



The historical Sydney Harbour Bridge.



Amy gets to hold a cuddly koala bear at Lone Pine Sanctuary.



Leigh's nervous about feeding the hungry kangaroos.



Minds and Hearts Clinic, Brisbane.