



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Costa Rica: Exploring Culture, Language and Natural Wonders
Name: Kelly Qureshi

Other Team Members:

Program: New York City Program

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

Location Visited: Costa Rica

Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 02

Project Summary: With diverse landscapes of gorgeous beaches, lush rainforests and active volcanoes, and a friendly and fun spirited culture, Costa Rica, or "rich coast", offered me many "rich" learning opportunities that have supported my development as an educator and inspired me personally. I went to Costa Rica to improve my Spanish language skills. Although I have taken Spanish for many years, I had feelings of frustration and being overwhelmed when I was not able to accurately communicate. As a teacher of recent immigrants, having this frustrating experience in the student role was an eye opening experience for the challenges my students face every day. I hope throughout this year I keep my experience in my thoughts as I support my students in their learning. I also went to Costa Rica to explore national parks to learn about Costa Rica's diverse environment and how Costa Rica has been successful in protecting this precious landscape. I was able to visit five national parks during my stay; each park offering a unique landscape and climate. For such a small country, the number of different species of plants, animals and other organisms amazed me. From the cloud forest in Monteverde, to the magnificence of the active Volcan Arenal and the boiling mud pots in Rincon de la Vieja, Costa Rica offered the ultimate education in biodiversity. I look forward to sharing this experience with my students and using Costa Rica as a case study to model biodiversity and conservation.

Career Impact: *Participated in Spanish language classes to support my continuous language development.
*Gained a better understanding of Latin American culture through my home-stay, language classes and travels.
*Had a sense of accomplishment at the end of my 5 week trip since this was my first time traveling alone internationally.
*Gained a deeper understanding of Costa Rica's environment to develop curriculum about biodiversity and conservation.

Classroom/Community Impact:*Improving my Spanish language skills has enhanced my ability to communicate with new Spanish speaking students and families.
*Being a student of a second language gives me a better perspective on how language is learned. This provides me with a new perspective in designing curriculum and activities that support English language learners in my science class.
*Through tours of the national parks in Costa Rica, I have a better understanding of the fragileness and complexity of environment and how Costa Rica has been committed to protecting it. This will greatly support the development of curriculum that will engage students in topics such as biodiversity, conservation, ecotourism and sustainability.

Open Response: *Five weeks definitely enabled me to improve my Spanish and practice on a daily basis, but I still need to continue to practice and take additional classes to be closer to fluency.
*I will teach a five week unit on biodiversity and ecotourism in the spring semester. The unit will focus on the question of how and why we protect the environment. My experiences in Costa Rica will shape the content. Development of this unit will be ongoing until then.
*I will continue to share my experiences with colleagues. With fellow science teachers, I will share what I learned about Costa Rica's parks and with all teachers I will share my frustrations as a student of language to remind us all of the enormous challenges our students face coming to this country and learning a new language.

Quote: I hope that what I learned about environment and conservation in Costa Rica will inspire my students to take action not only in the U.S. but in their native countries around the world as well.

Photos:



Waterfall in Rincon de la Vieja



Zip-lining through the cloud forest in Monteverde



Carefully walking over Rio Celeste



Overlooking Lake Arenal



Hiking along the untouched beach in the remote Parque Corcovado



Heading to clase de espanol!



The children at my homestay were my best teachers of Spanish!



My Mama Tica in Heredia!