



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Math Exchange: New York to China **Name:** Eleanor Terry
Other Team Members: Aneal Helms
Program: NYC - Asia Program
Trip Dates: 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001 **Location Visited:** Hong Kong and China
Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 02

Project Summary: In our three weeks in Hong Kong and mainland China, we were exposed to a new method of math education and were able to observe the national education system. We originally decided to go to Hong Kong and China because in our research prior to our trip, we discovered that the United States is behind other countries in math achievement scores however, Hong Kong students ranked 2nd in the world. We wanted to focus our research on this difference, especially amongst the disadvantaged population in Hong Kong. We went on our trip asking the following question: "Why are students in Hong Kong and China performing so well in math while the students in the US, who generally have the same method of instruction as those in Hong Kong, are performing lower?" Our question took us on an eye-opening adventure all over Hong Kong and China. We originally planned to be in Hong Kong for about a week visiting Hong Kong SummerBridge, however a week and a half prior to our departure, we were informed that the program would be shut down for the summer due to the H1N1 fears. We had enough contacts in Hong Kong and China that we felt our trip would still be educational.

We started in Hong Kong, visited a local high school and met up with the program directors of SummerBridge Hong Kong in order to interview them. From Hong Kong, we traveled to the Guangxi province where we biked through rice fields to a local rural school and spoke with the principal about math education in rural China. We also met with a math teacher who shared materials and teaching strategies with us. From Yangshuo we traveled to Chengdu, where we interviewed a teacher who helped re-build a school in the aftermath of the recent earthquakes. Our next stop was Xi'an, where we were able to witness first hand the intense outcome of the Terracotta Warriors project. We were also about to meet with a teacher in training. We were fascinated by her perspective on the Chinese education system. Our last stop on our whirlwind tour of China was to Beijing, where we went to several schools and met with several teachers. We also caught the interest of the China Daily Newspaper and had a full length article written about our adventures. This educational opportunity was one that we will never forget and are excited to share our findings with our students and colleagues.

Career Impact: We learned so much about ourselves, both personally and professionally, on this trip. We learned what it really means to have an open mind with our students, as their cultural backgrounds have a strong effect on how they perform and behave in our classrooms. In China, students are under so much stress from their family to perform well in their classes. There is a sense of pride that students feel when they do well, however, we found that sometimes the pressure seemed too much for the students. While we only see our students for an hour or so a day, they come to our classes with such deep-seated cultural ethic which effect how they learn, their behavior and their performance. Getting a closer look into the Chinese education system allowed us to have a deeper cultural sensitivity to all of our students.

We also learned some invaluable lessons on how to become better at differentiating instruction to learners of different levels. Speaking to the directors of SummerBridge Hong Kong gave us great insight into how to actually implement a successful peer-to-peer learning program in our own classrooms.

We also learned that our students LOVE receiving post cards.

Classroom/Community Impact:We strongly believe that teacher enrichment is school enrichment. As educators, we are role models to our students and potential inspirations to our colleagues. Through participating in this fellowship, we hope that we have demonstrated cultural curiosity and a commitment to improving instruction in our schools. Through our fellowship, we have been able to push ourselves and our colleagues to find innovative and energizing ways to continue to reflect on our own practices, try something new, and thus grow as educators.

Our students directly benefit from our trip because they are participating in the Math TA programs at our schools (outlined below). They also were inspired by our pictures and our stories to be the best they can be. It was an eye-opener for our students to learn that many students in China live without i-pods and brand-name sneakers, yet perform well in their academics.

Open Response: Before school began in early September, we put together a Professional Development plan that we presented to our respective staff at the Faculty Meeting in late September. We believe that the greatest lessons we took from our trip are: 1. Students rise to our expectations, so set them high. 2. Peer tutoring/teaching is powerful and should be utilized in classrooms on a regular basis. 3. Teaching math at an economically, culturally, and racially diverse classroom is challenging and cannot be directly compared to the more homogeneous classrooms of the east- but math is universal and the methods they employ in China can be

altered to fit our own needs.

We are currently in the process of creating a math TA program with the other math teachers at our schools. This program is being developed for a small group of students with strong math backgrounds and an ability to clearly explain the material to their peers. The program is designed to strengthen the mathematical/scientific communication skills of the student Teaching Assistants as well as to support the students who need peer tutoring.

Quote: Math in China doesn't just come from teacher to student, it's ingrained in the language, and enforced by a separate set of cultural and family values.

Photos:



The Great Wall- What a feat just to walk on it! Imagine the construction.



Entrance to the Forbidden Palace and Tiananmen Square.



This panda was in love with apples... We were in love with him!



Our school guide shows us the daily schedule, which includes "eye exercises."



Several students in summer school loved getting their picture with Ellie.



Students in Hong Kong register for classes.



One of our new international math teaching friends at a school in Hong Kong.



Lunch with students in Hong Kong after a school visit. Ellie had fish ball soup!