



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** Miles From Home: A New Appreciation And Understanding Of My Students  
**Name:** Sara Crawford

**Other Team Members:**

**Program:** Minneapolis Program

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

**Location Visited:** Guatemala

**Post Fellowship Reporting Template:** PFR Template 01

**Project Summary:** In July I had the amazing opportunity to visit Antigua, Guatemala for four weeks. I went there because Antigua has a bilingual school that is renowned for its teaching methods. Also, some of the best language schools are located in Antigua at very reasonable prices. 85% of my students speak Spanish as their first language. All of the communication in my school that is sent home is done in Spanish and English. The motivation for me to be fluent in Spanish is huge because I want to be able to communicate effectively with my students and their families. I send home weekly newsletters, call homes, have family conferences as well as have celebrations with the families. All of these situations require me to use my Spanish language skills.

I was inspired by the fact that at the early age of three years old that children were learning English and Spanish. The Boston School in Antigua separates the day for the children. Half of the day is taught in Spanish and half of the day is taught in English. The key to part of the success of this process seems to be the separation of the languages. When the children were with Ms. Kayla (Spanish Teacher) they only spoke Spanish. When the children were with Ms. Hania (English Teacher) they only spoke in English. Sometimes Ms. Hania would have to explain certain concepts and ideas in Spanish but in general tried to be firm about using only English in her classroom.

**Career Impact:** I was personally challenged on my Guatemalan journey to use Spanish every day. At the Boston school I was able to speak in English and Spanish. However, each afternoon I spent four hours as a Spanish student. I was the only student so I needed to be prepared and ready to give my full participation each day. Sometimes I was exhausted from my five hours at the Boston school but I knew that this was exactly that challenge that I needed to increase my fluency and comprehension in Spanish. After school, I needed to use Spanish in every aspect of my life. Every day was a new adventure where I was taken out of my normal comfort zone.

**Classroom/Community Impact:** I have a new appreciation and understanding of my students who are learning two languages. I work with 4 and 5 year olds. Many times this is their first experience in a school setting away from Mom. They are thrown into a situation where English is the primary language and they are expected to thrive in this new environment. I have realized how fearless my students are in their ability to learn and grow.

I also have a new respect for the families that I work with. These families are putting all their trust in me that I will take care of their child, nurture them and provide a safe and happy learning environment.

**Open Response:** I came back to school fully motivated to use some of my new Spanish language skills. My main project that I started is reading stories in Spanish first to gain vocabulary and then several times in English afterwards. We call this the repeated read-aloud. The research has shown that the repeated read-aloud is very important for English Language Learners.

I tried this last week with Eric Carle's, The Very Hungry Caterpillar (La Oruga Muy Hambriente). The children loved hearing the story in Spanish and then in English. I put the book in the Book Center area and the children were requesting the story to be read over and over again.

**Quote:** I have a new appreciation for how fearless my 4 and 5 year-olds are about learning a new language.

Photos:



Students at Boston School.



Going on a nature walk with Boston Students.



Ms. Hania (English Teacher) and Ms. Karla (Spanish Teacher)



The Preschool class at Boston school learning about fruit.



The Preschool class singing "Mr. Sun".



Building relationships with the families that I work with is essential.



Reading stories in Spanish and then English is an ELL strategy that I am using.



Reading with my student.