Beyond our Borders: Collaborations with International P-12 Schools in Mexico

Dean’s Innovation Grant 2012 awarded to Dr. Marsha Riddle Buly

This project focused on collaboration between Woodring College of Education and the John F. Kennedy International Baccalaureate (IB) School in Queretaro, Mexico. The school is also known as the American School of Queretaro. The opportunity for the Language Diversity Director and the Chair of Elementary Education to personally visit Queretaro, Ole language school, and the John F. Kennedy IB school during the 2012/2013 academic year provided an opportunity to expand our collaboration, assess the current instruction and curriculum in the school to determine the match to LLC/WCE objectives, and work with the staff to determine collaboration options for WCE students that would go beyond our borders.

To establish a partnership, we needed to first have an understanding of the faculty, curricular expectations, and community of the school so that we could begin to build rich two-way collaborative opportunities for our students and faculty. Ultimately, this could lead to faculty/teacher exchanges, professional development for teacher education faculty from WCE, professional development for John F. Kennedy’s staff either in Queretaro or on campus in Bellingham, student exchanges, and P-12 opportunities in Queretaro for our future and present teachers.

Dr. Carney and Dr. Riddle Buly visited Queretaro October of 2012. This was ideal timing as LLC had a student teacher completing her internship at the school. They also met with the principal of the school. The principal was very interested in continuing collaboration with WWU if “we had more students who were as strong as X.” His interest was a result of the positive experience he, his staff, and the parents/community had with our student teacher and the positive experience of our demonstrated interest in the school.

The school is most interested in interns during the fall quarter of a year. The principal believes that he would be able to offer at least one each year a position for the following year, based on the school need and the quality of the intern’s experience. Subsequent to our visit, the principal offered our current student teacher a full-time position for the 2013/2014 school year and she also accepted a long-term position to complete the 2012/2013 year. Having our alumni there strengthens our opportunities for partnerships. For example, the school has already requested assistance, though her, in finding strong math educators who might be interested in working with the school. In addition, the school is interested in working with us to connect with elementary IB schools in our region.

Face-to-face conversations are essential to establishing a strong partnership. This visit was a critical step as we continue our work on enriching opportunities for our P-12 teacher candidates, teachers in our region, and the students they teach.

Our intern’s classroom....