

Kim DeMarco

Franklin H. Mayberry Elementary School, East Hartford CT

Research personal histories and genetic blueprints while experiencing the culture, history and schools across Vietnam to bridge the gap between students of diverse cultures and encourage a celebration of difference while enhancing discourse.

Where I've Been

- Da Nang, Vietnam
- Hanoi, Vietnam
- Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam

My Fellowship in Images



Amanda and I in the Mekong Delta, learning how the Vietnamese survived during the war



We spent the day on a Vietnamese rice farm. We learned how to pick the rice and make a vietnamese rice dinner.



I met the nun who found me in a bombed out village in 1972, Da Nang



Riding on Mopeds in the middle of Ho Chi Minh City. It was terrifying, yet amazing !



On our way to Ha Long Bay, the view was amazing!!



We had silk Vietnamese dresses made to order. We can't wait to show to our students!

Your Personal and Professional Growth

How have your knowledge, skills and capabilities grown?

My trip to Vietnam was absolutely amazing. I am so thankful for having the opportunity to be able to visit my homeland where I was born during a devastating war in 1972. My hopes and dream were to one day go to Vietnam and return and share with my students. This past summer June 2017 I was able to go on an adventure of a life time. I was able to visit 3 different cities and to learn about the different cultures of each. My eyes opened to the love, poverty and culture of the Vietnamese.

As a result, in what ways will your instructional practice change?

My instructional practices will definitely change this school year. I will share the cultural experience with my students. I will encourage all students to look at their past and see where they came from. Admiring ones culture gives a greater appreciation for who they are, where they came from and what they want to become. I will teach the students about my life and being abandoned in the middle of the Vietnam War. Looking at their heritage will give a great impact to the understanding of life.

What is the greatest personal accomplishment of your fellowship?

My greatest accomplishments was meeting a fellow adoptee from the war. I had the opportunity to visit her and her orphanage that she now runs. We are able to tour around Ho Chi Minh City, which was previously know as Saigon. Eating a traditional Vietnamese dinner at her orphanage and meeting the children that lived there was so much fun. My next part of the trip had the most impact on me. I was able to visit the orphanage that I was brought to, in Da Nang. I met 2 of the nuns who remembered me!!

Impact on Your Classroom, School and Community

How will your experiences positively impact student learning in new ways?

My experience will leave a positive impact on my students. It will allow them to see my not only as a teacher but a human being who has gone through some tough times. Being adopted what not always easy and I know many of my students can relate to some kind of difference in their lives. Having the students know that I am learning about other cultures and ways we can include it in our every day learning will definitely make them have a sense of belonging.

What are your plans for working collaboratively with colleagues?

My colleague and I are incorporating the Vietnamese culture by frequently wearing the dresses that we bought to our classrooms. We bought artifacts to display in our classroom. We also bought maps so we can show the students where they came from. We will be completing a Heritage project with a Pot Luck dinner.

Imagining the Future

How do you envision celebrating of your students' new learning?

My students already know that my colleague and I went to Vietnam. We did a fundraiser last year to help collect money for the orphanage. We also created a blog and put pictures onto class DOJO. They were so excited to come into our classrooms this year and ask about our trip. We will begin by having a powerful talk about me and being adopted from Vietnam. I will show pictures of when I was in the orphanage and then talk to the students about the ups and downs that I had growing up.

Are there issues or challenges in your school, community or the greater world about which you and your students might try to make a difference?

Yes, we are a low poverty school with different cultures and ways of living. I would love to write to the orphanage and have the students be connected to others their age. We will send pictures and hopefully they would do the same. Having a real life experience with my students will help them to further understand other cultures and differences.

How would you describe to a friend or a grant funder the most fundamental ways in which your fellowship has changed your personal and/or professional perspective?

This grant has truly changed my way of teaching and being a wife and mother. I have learned to be thankful for what I have. I have learned that many people put their lives in jeopardy in order for me to survive. I learned more about the Vietnam War. I learned that the Vietnamese call it the American war. The Vietnamese have forgiven the Americans for what has happened and I learned that simple mistakes in our lives need to be forgotten. TI never realized how lucky I am! Learn to accept!!