Summer Immersion Program in Panama
Linguistic and Cultural Immersion in the Panamanian Schools
Sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-Stout

Why Panama?
- Location, location, location
  - Crossroads of the World
- Socio-political stability of the country
- Current change in the education system
- Interest for professional (e.g., faculty, administrators) scholar exchange and collaboration from the Ministry of Education (MIEUC), Secretaria Nacional para la Integracion de las Personas con Discapacidad (SENA), the University of Panama, and UW-Stout.
- Boquete – multicultural miniature melting pot
  - Ngöbe Buglé tribe (tri-lingual)
How did it Happened?

- Idea developed after taking a faculty in 2007 (previous mentors Drs. Fletcher and Mishra, University of Arizona)
- Gathered a list of possible contacts in Panama (University, schools, and government agencies) in Spring 2008
  - Emails and phone calls
  - Applied for an institutional grant/funds approved
- Traveled to Panama during Fall 2008 (unofficial visit) and again in Spring 2009 (official visit) prior to last summer
- Lots of brainstorming sessions in order to address student enrollment, location, cost, length of the program, safety issues, course offering, fieldwork experience, educational and recreational activities, and residing with host families vs. apartment, etc.

Goals and Evaluation Methods

- Developing cultural competence
  - Self-awareness, knowledge, and basic skills for decision making
- Acquiring a second language
- Methods to evaluate personal and professional growth
  - Self-Awareness Scale (SAS)
  - Overseas Experience Assessment Scales (OEAS)
    - Five content areas (language skills, cultural competence, knowledge of culture, knowledge of public education system, and school psychological services of the host country)
  - Reflective Personal Assessment (RPA)

Language Acquisition

- Spanish language lab at Universidad Santa Maria la Antigua (USMA)
  - 3 times a week, for 4 hours
  - Verbal (receptive/expressive) and written skills
- Host families and social settings
  - Schools
    - Students
    - Teachers and pupil service providers
Logistics

- Dates: July 12 – August 8, 2010 (typically during 2nd summer session)
- Cost: $2,600.00 (6 credits, Spanish class, plus field trips), personal expenses $1,500.00 (includes flight and $300.00 for housing)
- Open to in-training graduate students and practicing school psychologists as well as school counselors
- Two faculty participate in program (one bilingual/bi-cultural)
- Study Abroad Office oversees documentation and university-related budget
- Faculty meetings in early Fall to discuss projections for upcoming year
- Maintains record of inquiries as well as mails out application packets
- Schedules general student orientation in the Spring semester prior to departure

Course Format

- Coordinated with government agencies (MEDUCA and SENADIS) and Spanish language facilities at USMA
- Course format
  - Weekly readings, lecture/grand round
  - Journal/reflection assignments
  - Fieldwork assignments in local schools (urban and rural communities)
- Field trips (recreational and cultural immersion)
- Volunteer opportunities with non-governmental organizations (NGO)

Panama 600:
A Review of Course Objectives Compared to Trip Activities

Expected Outcome Competencies Realized: Linguistic and Cultural Immersion in the Panamanian Schools
Summer 2009

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Objective 1

- "Relate to contemporary theories relating to culture and its impact in the cognitive, emotional, and social development of children."
- Student experience in Panamanian schools
- Discussion of professional practice nuances when working with children from diverse / minority family backgrounds
- Costa Rica / Panama port of entry
- Pro-integración
- Maria Ruiz, Ph.D. (Industrial Engineer), guest speaker
- "Stout Class: Education and Special Education in Panama"

Objective 2

- "Articulate differences encountered by the bilingual or English Language Learner in and English-based school curriculum as a result of their cultural diversity and not having English as their native language."
- Volunteer in Panamanian schools 4 days / week
- Discussion and sharing of unique student experiences within the schools
- Exploration of program student experience in Panamanian school against ELL student experience in U.S. schools
- Isla Grande / Portobelo / Colon experience
- "Stout Class: Understanding the relevance of Latino American and its relevance to the work of school psychologists in the United States"
- "Stout Class: Best Practices working with ELL students and their families"

Objective 3

- "Articulate the theoretical and practical relevance of the relationship between culture, language, and cognition."
- Volunteering Saturday mornings at Pro-integración
- Extra-curricular Activities
  - Guided tour of Panama City area:
    - Panama Viejo, Casco Viejo, Panama Nuevo, Kuna Market, Central Avenue, Panama Canal visitation and transit, Albrook Mall, Suarez Coffee Farm, Las Tinajas dinner & dance
  - Host family cultural immersion
- "Stout Class: Theories of Second Language Acquisition"
- "Stout Class: Ethical and Legal Policies with ELL Students"
Objective 4

- “Justify a research basis for the need for effective pupil service delivery to English Language Learners (ELLs) for enhancing their educational development.”
- In-class comparisons paralleling history of U.S. and Panamanian education programs
- SENADIS, MEDUCA, USMA
- Discussion of listed activities and experience
- "Stout Class: Issues of Preparation and Training of ELL Service Providers"
- "Stout Class: Assessment of English Language Learners (ELL) and Intervention Services with ELL Students"

Objective 5

- “Apply knowledge of ethnicity, language, and culture as significant parameters in understanding educational over- and underrepresentation in special education services.”
- Reflection paper
  - an analysis of all preceding experiences
  - relational synthesis of all intra- and extra-course activities and experiences: in-school volunteering, mental health services volunteering, language class (USMA), UW-Stout class.
  - creation and application of a new, unique student personality resultant of Panama 600

Evaluation/Assessment

- Cross-cultural Interview
- Summary reflection paper
- Reflective log/journaling
- School-based field experience
Summary

- Trip Goals:
  - Student acceptance of new experiences / immersion
    - host-family relationship
    - professional exchange experiences
  - group oriented extra-curricular activities in both “rural” and urban settings
  - Student incorporation of new experiences / analysis via guided experience
  - Student synthesis of new experiences / synthesis via course requirements
  - Creation of student identity meeting DPI multicultural competency standards
  - ADVOCACY for CLD students in our public schools

“By acquiring knowledge of the various cultures of the students and families they serve, school psychologists can convert that knowledge into psycho-educational practice that in turn, can empower them to transform practices and conduct their work through the cultural lenses of their clients...”

(Trainer’s Forum, 2004)

For more information, please visit us at http://www.uwstout.edu/intl/programs/pan_psych_st.html