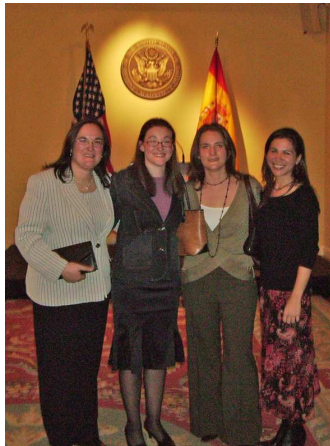


This fall I had the opportunity to meet the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Ms. Dina Powell. Ms. Powell was in Spain for a European Fulbright Conference and she wanted to visit a typical Spanish secondary school. She came to my school and it was wonderful to meet her and show her the work that I am doing. My students and colleagues were also very excited to meet such an important official from the United States government. My bilingual students were delighted that they understood Ms. Powell when she spoke English. I also had the opportunity to attend the European Fulbright Conference for directors of Fulbright offices and I spoke on a panel describing the program that I am participating in and the challenges and benefits of the teaching assistant program in a secondary school with a diverse immigrant population. The focus of this year's conference was diversity in all aspects of the Fulbright program.



I stayed in Madrid for the holidays, and it was really interesting to see how Christmas is celebrated in this predominantly Catholic country. January 6th is actually the most important holiday when the three kings bring candy and toys for the children. Santa Claus is unfortunately gaining popularity here, so the kids are starting to get confused because they get gifts on Christmas and then again 12 days later. I had the opportunity to travel around during the winter break, and I was able to visit London, which is just a fabulous city. I had a wonderful time there - and it was great to hear people speaking English!

After winter break, we started a new project with my students, using an "American" pedagogical approach. We had the two classes in the bilingual project create a newspaper about local events in the school and the community. My students studied English newspapers and proper writing techniques for a newspaper article. Then we had them work in groups to write the articles. This was a huge deal for them because in general there is minimal group work at any level in the Spanish education system. For me, it was really rewarding to watch my students and colleagues struggle with the idea of having students work together to produce one product. It was great to teach my students group management techniques and push them to think in new ways. The newspaper came out great and my students, despite protests at first, really enjoyed the group work.

In February, my school collaborated with the United States Embassy and a non-profit organization called Cooperation in Sports to bring D.C. United (one of the top soccer teams in the U.S) to Spain for two weeks as a part of their spring training. Some of the players came to my school to talk to all the students about how sports are one way to achieve cultural understanding. D.C. United has a very diverse team, and some of the students in my school from Argentina and Bolivia were delighted to speak with members of the team from their native countries. My bilingual students were excited that they understood what the players said when they spoke in English. A friendly game was arranged between the local soccer team in the town where I work and D.C. United. Overall it was a positive experience for everyone involved, and it helped my students to be even more invested in their study of English.



At the beginning of March I attended a conference in Berlin for Fulbright grantees in Europe. It was



incredible to see the city and the conference was really interesting. I was so impressed by the projects that grantees are working on throughout Europe. It was amazing to share stories about the cultural experiences we are all having in our respective host countries and cities. The hot topic



at the conference was education because currently countries in the European Union are looking to synchronize their university programs to allow continuity in all university degree programs throughout Europe. There was also a great deal of talk about how the United States still produces the "best" universities in the world and European countries are starting in some ways to adapt more "American" models in their own universities. We talked about benchmarking, evaluations, and criteria for what makes a university "great." It had OCLD written all over it!!

Next week I am headed to a conference in Toledo, Spain for all Fulbright grantees in Spain. I am



looking forward to seeing some grantees who I haven't seen since orientation in the fall. What is so great about this conference is that it is so OCLD! What we are looking to do, in addition to providing the program with feedback about the grant period thus far, is to create and implement knowledge management processes. This is the first year that the teaching assistant program has been in primary and secondary schools.

Previously, teaching assistants worked in private academies. Seeing as how it is our first year, we are looking to document our experiences so that those who come after us won't have to learn the "hard way" regarding many of the challenges that we encountered in our first few months at work. We are hoping to start a system where grantees document and share information for future grantees.

Overall, I am having an amazing time here in Madrid. My job is so rewarding and I constantly use skills that I learned in OCLD classrooms. I also have time to travel and meet so many interesting people (and see OCLD undergrads and alums who are abroad). It scares me how quickly time is going by. I only have two more months here, but I am enjoying every minute of it!

Take care,
Janet