Inquiry Project Proposal

Inquiry Project Title
Why the Debate? How the Study of Argumentation and Debate Increases Language Proficiency

One of the main components of the Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Program is the design and completion of an inquiry project that is directly relevant and applicable to classroom practice. The U.S. Department of State is particularly interested in supporting projects that reach students in traditionally underserved groups including girls, racial and ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, and students in underresourced communities and schools. Please provide the information below describing the project you propose to undertake while in your preferred host country, being sure to incorporate your chosen theme (International Best Practices or Developing Global Competence) into your proposal. Please note that the inquiry project is intended to be practice-based and is not designed to support the development of dissertations or other research activities (please note that Ph.D. students and researchers are encouraged to apply for the Fulbright Scholar Program or other more relevant programs).

Please provide the following information:

1. A description of the project’s purpose, objectives, expected outcomes, and final project format and content.

The purpose of this best practices project is to determine the successful strategies in learning English as a second language by using argumentation and debate activities (co-curricular and extra-curricular). Among the most cited advantages to debate participation are oral communication competency, improved reading comprehension, highly developed listening skills, and improved critical thinking in a language that is not the child's first language. I want to share the practices that I have used for the past five years to see what we share as a debate community while learning the best strategies from Dutch educators.

The objectives of the professional development project are to 1) share my best practices in order to see if there is commonality, 2) learn best practices in the teaching of English to English language learners, 3) to learn how debate is used in the Netherlands to increase language proficiency, 4) to return to Los Angeles and develop curriculum and professional development opportunities that stimulate the same impact and success as demonstrated in the Netherlands. The final project will come in the format of a written report that includes curriculum for English classrooms in my school, strategies that can be applied across the curriculum in other subject matter, and professional development seminars with my school colleagues. The final project will also lead to a curriculum book for the Los Angeles Metropolitan Debate League.

2. A description of how your project will enhance your professional development and career goals.

This project will allow me to find additional strategies of working with English language learners to enhance their language development through the process of argumentation and debate. I will be able to share with Dutch educators what I have learned over the course of the previous five years to see if the same strategies are being used in a country that has a high level of achievement in studying the English language and in the area of international debate.

Last year, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Debate League asked me to collaborate on creating a debate curriculum for member schools, but also for outreach in schools where argumentation can become part of a teacher’s pedagogical practice in a standard English course. The curriculum is still in its early development, and my intention is to design curriculum specifically for the demographic that many Los Angeles educators are teaching. The English language development of English language learners is of utmost importance to school districts as they struggle to find ways to increase proficiency in the language so that students can find literacy success across the curriculum.

I continue to believe, based on U.S. national research, that language proficiency can be assisted through

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debate activities in the classroom and extracurricular participation beyond the classroom. Through the Fulbright program, I will be able to return with a greater sense of curriculum development and teaching.

3. A description of the process you will follow in order to implement your project, approximate time frame for each step, individuals that might be involved, methods used, and activities.

I plan to begin the process before I leave the United States. I will meet with the Executive Director of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Debate League in order to determine what best practices to look for in the Dutch model for debate. While in the host country, I would like to meet with faculty advisors at the university and audit their courses on argumentation. The advisors may lead me to "feeder" high schools where best teaching practices can be observed. Once I have a grounding from faculty advisors and solid contacts of high school teachers, I will begin my field work which includes high school classroom visits and debate tournament participation. Through observations and post-observation meetings to compare best practices, I will begin to outline curriculum (units and lessons with activities) to move toward my final report and curriculum implementation when I return to the U.S.

I plan to use methods of individual conferencing with educators to larger planned seminars with groups of debate teachers. I also will spend an enormous amount of time with classroom observations and post-observation conferencing with teachers. I would also like to propose team teaching opportunities with fellow educators which will give me the opportunity to teach my best practices to English language learners. For culminating events, I will attend high school debate tournaments, as well as university debate tournaments in order to observe and volunteer to judge debate rounds.

4. An explanation of why your proposed first choice country is particularly well suited for pursuing your project.

The Netherlands has an excellent international reputation for English language development, especially as a second language. Furthermore, the Dutch school systems teach debate in English which serves to increase proficiency levels in English as well as critical thinking and college preparation. Because of the reputation for the teaching of argumentation and debate as a co-curricular and extra-curricular piece to language development, the Netherlands serves as an excellent "best practices" approach for what I wish to learn and collaborate with Dutch educators and back in my home high school.

5. Please describe how your project will reach underserved populations in your home country.

My school is in the 90 percentile of the free or reduced price lunch program, while I have a large number of students in which English is their second language. The professional development project will directly serve the students in my classroom while impacting the students in other classrooms as I continue to collaborate with colleagues on best practices. As I development the home portion of the professional development, I will be directly involved with the Los Angeles Metropolitan Debate League which serves the "inner-city schools" of Los Angeles. All professional development seminars that I hold with fellow debate educators will directly serve some of the city's poorest children who need the additional assistance in learning the English language.

This project is proposed in order to assist the students I work with and the league that serves the same demographic.

6. A description of how you will apply what you learn when you return to the United States, including a description of how your project will benefit your U.S. school, community, teaching practice and educational policy dialogue (as relevant).

Once I return to school, my teaching practices for the Speech & Debate class at Los Angeles Leadership Academy will benefit students who are primarily English language learners. I will apply the "best practices"
learned to my classroom while implementing these practices into my 10th grade English classroom. As the Common Core standards call for more critical thinking/logic along with argumentation, I will be able to hold professional development strategy sessions with teachers across the school on how to implement these strategies in their content areas.

My plan is to further the curriculum development of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Debate League with the finalizing of the curriculum book that is proposed for the league and its member schools. I will further hold professional development seminars with the teachers who have debate teams in the league to offer the English language learner strategies to assist with instruction in their classrooms.

As a member of the National Speech & Debate honor's society, there are frequent opportunities for teacher coaches to hold online webinars for coaches across the country who are working with the same demographic of child that these strategies are intended to assist. As a member coach, I will hold webinars to assist in this practice.

7. Bibliography (10 item limit): Please list up to 10 items that support your inquiry project proposal.


8. You are encouraged to include in this section any resources in support of your program that you have identified in your proposed host country (e.g., potential host universities, faculty advisor names and affiliations, contacts in local primary and secondary schools, etc.). Including these resources in your inquiry project proposal is optional and their inclusion or absence will not affect selection decisions.

University of Amsterdam - Discourse and Argumentation Studies

Faculty advisors - Dr. Bart Garssen and Dr. Corina Andone

University debating societies are available to see what high schools are feeding into the university debate societies.

International Debate Education Association: high school debaters in the Netherlands are members and frequently attend debate tournaments and debate in online communities through the association.

9. A limited number of nine month long grants are available to U.S. teachers whose projects warrant extended time abroad. Please explain the value of this extra time in country to your project development, including how you will utilize the extra time in the host country.

I do not envision needing nine months to complete the professional development program. The best practices...