CPD Researchers Visit Ecuador, Work With Its Education Ministry

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Researchers from the CPD went south last month, as part of a collaboration with Ecuador’s Ministry of Education to evaluate programs there.

They were there as part of a planning grant, investigating the possibility of working with the ministry to evaluate programs in Ecuador. The proposed projects would deal with preschools, inclusion of children with disabilities in the schools, newborn hearing screening, and infant programs for children ages 0 to 3.

"We got to see preschool programs throughout the entire country, from the jungles to the cities to the coasts to the highlands," said Dr. Gina Cook, a collaborator on the planning grant.

"The recent visit to Ecuador was an important learning experience," said Dr. Eduardo Ortiz, another collaborator on the grant. "It was powerful to see how comfortable and knowledgeable young children were talking about their surrounding plants, animals, and nature."

The team saw some schools with lots of resources, and others with few. American educators often have similar challenges, adapting programs to make sure they work in schools no matter what materials are available to them.

The learning is definitely a two-way process, said DDE Center for Early Care and Education Director Lisa Boyce, a CPD faculty fellow who went with the researchers. She is another collaborator on the planning grant. "I have yet to see so many teachers being so responsive to children. I have found that I can teach educational strategies to teachers, but I struggle with being able to teach the level of connectedness that I observed in those schools."

The group will return to Ecuador next month to train government officials on conducting evaluations and incorporating research into its programs.

In addition to her work with the CPD, Gina Cook is now an adjunct research assistant professor in the Family, Consumer and Human Development department at USU. She also provided the photos that accompany this blog post. For more images from schools in Ecuador, visit our Facebook page.