



Teaching Placements in China Lead to New Adventures, New Careers

Partnership between Faculty of Education and Maple Leaf Schools Grows in its Second Year

From left to right: Dr. Jan Oakley (International Initiatives Coordinator) with Manal El Azmi, Jenna Kirker, Chelsey Lees, David Berg, Anna Lisa Martin, Alyssa Jodoin, Justin Raposo and Jeff Duncan, in China.

Last May, a second cohort of graduates from the Faculty of Education travelled to China for a teaching placement at a Maple Leaf school.

The group of eight newly certified teachers – David Berg, Jeff Duncan, Manal El-Azmi, Alyssa Jodoin, Jenna Kirker, Chelsey Lees, Anna Lisa Martin, and Justin Raposo – were split among Maple Leaf schools in Wuhan, Dalian, and Jinshitan, China, teaching classes from Grade 2 to Grade 12.

“Teaching in China was unexpected and adventure-filled,” says Anna Lisa Martin. “As I commuted each morning to the school, I was intrigued by the people around me and their way of life. When I got to school, the students were bright and eager to learn, and they had so much to teach me about their own cultures. Their work ethic was inspiring!”

David Berg agrees.

“Teaching in China was amazing. The students are extremely polite in the classrooms and you sometimes even experience a student thanking you for the lesson.”

The three-week teaching placements were offered as part of a partnership established between Lakehead’s Faculty of Education and Maple Leaf Educational Systems. Maple Leaf schools, which are spread across 10 cities in China, teach a Canadian curriculum to Chinese and international students.

All of the participants gained valuable new teaching skills and perspectives.

Justin Raposo explains: “While teaching my Grade 11 classes, I learned that my Chinese students were coming from a cultural background that has

previously been so isolated from the Western world that many of my references and examples were not understood. I had to adapt my lessons so that every facet of them was approachable for my students. I also came to learn that these students underwent a complicated cognitive process when answering questions: they had to 1) translate my question into Chinese, 2) come up with an answer in Chinese, 3) translate that answer into English, and 4) raise their hand to answer the question. You don’t quite get to learn about this kind of thing until you’ve experienced it.”

New Adventures and New Careers

The group took advantage of the vast opportunities to explore ancient Chinese culture and tour in different cities and neighbouring countries, including Beijing, Xi’an, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Korea.

“Visiting China is an incredible experience,” Manal El-Azmi explains. “We climbed the Great Wall, visited the Terracotta army, saw a Kung Fu show, stayed in traditional-style hotels, ate amazing new foods (some people ate scorpions), and taught, all at the same time.”

For five of the eight participants, the experience offered a launching point for a new teaching career: Anna Lisa, David, Jeff, Chelsey, and Alyssa all signed two-year contracts to teach in China, effective September 2015.

“I never imagined myself teaching in Asia, but now I am so thankful that Lakehead and Maple Leaf provided me the opportunity to do this placement,”



Anna Lisa Martin, working with students on her placement. Anna Lisa is now teaching at the Maple Leaf Foreign Nationals School – Dalian.

says Alyssa Jodoin. “It gave me the reassurance that teaching abroad is really not that scary. I have returned to the Maple Leaf campus where I completed my placement (in Dalian) to begin my career as a teacher!”

Jeff Duncan, who is now teaching in Wuhan, agrees.

“My participation in the international teaching placement gave me the experience I needed to feel confident living and teaching abroad. It led to me getting a job in the same school where I’m now teaching. I had the opportunity to meet the staff and principal, see how the school is run, and also teach there myself before I accepted a position – which is not something that many just graduating teachers can say.”

The partnership between the Faculty of Education and Maple Leaf schools will continue in the 2015-2016 year, with a goal of offering more students a taste of life and teaching in China.