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2024 Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Program for International Teachers

L.E.A.R.N

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*Collaboration allows us to know more than we are capable of knowing by ourselves*

*– Paul Solarz*

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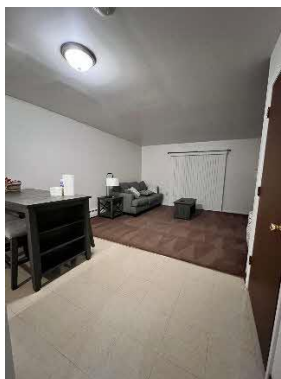
As I began my twenty-nine-hour journey of three flights and two transits to the other side of the world, I wondered what awaited me. I was with two other Singaporean educators that I barely knew. Our differences were apparent in the diverse subjects we taught - PE, Economics and Literature - and we had only met during the selection process. Nonetheless, I was comforted by their presence, knowing that I wasn't going into the unknown alone.



*Left: 29 hours before,  
departing from T2,  
Changi Airport.*



*Right: 29 hours later, still  
on the same date, arriving  
at Greater Rochester  
International Airport.*



*A short 6-minute ride later, arriving at my humble abode for the next 120 days. A town house like 2-bedroom duplex which I shared with another educator on the programme from a different country.*

## **Listen**

When would you ever be able to put twenty-two educators from around the world in the same room? Fulbright did just that, and each week, different countries would share unique stories and challenges from their classrooms. It was interesting to note that there were common challenges across different systems and how each system had their unique value propositions in education. What was particularly notable were the differences in organisational structure and how curriculum was planned and implemented. The sharing was rich and allowed us a glimpse of what life looks like in another place. Through weeks of listening, I realised how much we had taken for granted the systems and resources that we have in place in Singapore. These are privileges that we enjoy because of good planning and governance, something that we should guard fiercely and use wisely.



*Weekly seminars*



*Outside Warner Sch*



*Sharing about Singapore*

## **Engage**

From classroom discussions to informal gatherings, we found ourselves constantly engaged in rich discussions about education and how it differed in each country. While the classroom provided a space for formal discussion on systematic implementations and challenges, the cultural exhibitions allowed for more free-flowing conversations sparked by various artifacts like tea pots or even spices! We got to sit down together as Singaporeans and brainstorm what we wanted to feature about Singapore – there was so much to pick from, and of course, we settled on food. It was midway through when AST reached out to check in on how we were doing, and I think

a good quote to sum it up is: “When overseas, you learn more about your own country than you do about the place you are visiting.” The immense pride we felt, especially when our audience knew about the good things we do as a country, made me even more proud to be Singaporean.



*Cultural exhibitions*



*Fulbright Engagement Dinner*



*Halloween Gathering*

### Adapt

One of the key highlights of the experience was observing the operations in local schools and collaborating with their teachers and students. I had the privilege of working with both the Music and PE departments during my time at Council Rock Primary School. The teachers I worked with were very supportive of my project on Cooperative Learning, and we had many meaningful and engaging conversations on implementing and refining various lessons. Even though the curriculum differed from ours, we found common ground and successfully integrated the project into what was already planned for the year.

At the end of the school attachment, I had gleaned valuable insights and ideas for my project. An unexpected but delightful outcome was how “Chan Mali Chan” ~~was~~ became widely sung and danced to throughout the school.





*4 of us attached to CRPS*



*Teaching "Chan Mali Chan" at Music*



*Learning in PE*

### Reflect

Participating in the programme has enhanced my personal toolkit for interacting with students in ways that promote positive outcomes. It reinforced the value of active listening, respectful exchanges and redirecting students – all essential practices educators can and should employ to create meaningful connections in the classroom. It also opened my eyes to the possibilities of inclusive education, showing that even small changes can make learning more accessible for every child. Through conversations with my peers, I gained a deeper appreciation of my country's unique educational strengths and challenges, prompting me to reflect on how I could contribute to its growth. Most importantly, I discovered new things about myself—my strengths, areas for growth, and the resilience to adapt and thrive in unfamiliar situations.



## eNjoy

My mother likes to say, “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”. She is arguably the inspiration for my ability to self-care. The host university organised several experiences for us, but our experience would not be complete without our own planned visits to games and national parks. The scenery was unparalleled and majestic, as was the atmosphere at the various sporting events we attended – the National Basketball Association (NBA) games, the US Open Tennis Championships, and the Major League Baseball tournaments. These experiences created memories that I will look back on fondly.



*These experiences strengthened the bonds of friendship we built along the way. I made many new friends, but among them, the two fellow Singaporeans who shared this journey with me have become dear friends whom I will always cherish fondly.*





*Fulbright Alumna (2023-2024), signing off.*