

Eleven Guilford County Teachers Selected to Participate in International Program

Freedom of speech is an essential component of a healthy democracy. Exercising this right by deliberating complex issues, can help young citizens be more informed and engaged community members who make better decisions. Schools have the potential to be powerful sites for such democratic exchanges by providing students with the skills and opportunities to have meaningful discussions of current events and controversial issues. **Deliberating in a Democracy Americas (DDA)**, a program of the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago (CRFC), the Constitutional Rights Foundation in Los Angeles (CRF), and Street Law, Inc., was designed with this potential in mind. The goal of DDA is to promote the teaching and learning of democratic principles and the skills of civic deliberation among a new generation in the United States and in Latin America. And the program is coming to a North Carolina school near you!

This year, the **North Carolina Civic Education Consortium** (www.civics.org) was chosen as one of seven American sites to participate in the DDA program. The Consortium has partnered with Guilford County Schools for the exciting initiative. Teachers and students throughout the district will work with teachers and students from California, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, and Virginia as well as four international partners—Columbia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru—as they learn and deliberate about pressing issues in our democracies.

Eleven Guilford County teachers began their work with the program by participating in an international training in Lima, Peru, July 31 – August 4, 2011. Teachers spent the week learning about the DDA deliberation process, exploring the lesson plans that they will use with their students, and planning future collaborations with teachers from Guayaquil, Ecuador (North Carolina’s international partner site.) Specifically, the teachers planned videoconferences and discussed setting up blogs that would allow students from North Carolina and Ecuador to exchange international perspectives on the deliberation topics. While in Peru, participants also had a few evenings to learn more about the vibrant Peruvian culture and history through visits to various historic sites, including Peru’s Congress.



After several long days of conference work, teachers participated in trips to historical sites in Lima, such as Huaca Pucllana (pictured), ruins dating back to 6th century A.D that are situated in the midst of city life.

Upon returning home, 8 participating teachers from the North Carolina team presented three informational sessions on the deliberative process at Guilford County’s district-wide “Back to School Social Studies Conference” on August 22.

“We felt it was important to share the DDA program with all the Social Studies teachers in our district, especially since the lessons are easy to implement and purposeful, and we believe in the strategy,” said Diana Becker, a teacher at GTCC’s Middle College in Greensboro, NC and one of the session presenters. “The teachers who attended our sessions were excited to see a practical way to tackle controversial topics that all

levels of students can participate in. Not to mention, the website is user friendly, making it easy for any teacher to access and implement in class,” she said.



Diana Becker teaches her class at Middle College at Guilford Technical Community College-Greensboro the process of civil deliberation.

As the North Carolina team also hosted several of their partner educators from Ecuador as part of DDA’s teacher exchange component. During the last week of September, teachers from Guayaquil observed several Guilford County classrooms as teachers led their students through the deliberative process. They also joined North Carolina teachers for a professional development session, as well as toured various cultural sites, such as the International Civil Rights Museum.

Deliberating in the Democracy in the Americas is funded by the U.S. Department of Education (grants (#Q304A040003 and #Q304A070005). To learn more about DDA, and to access the free lesson plans online, please visit: <http://www.deliberating.org/>. If you would like more information regarding the Civic Education Consortium, an innovative provider of free lesson plans and professional development opportunities for NC teachers, visit www.civics.org or contact Christie Hinson Norris at cnorris@unc.edu.



Guilford County teachers present an informative session on American democracy in Lima, Peru. Pictured left to right are: David Frye, Dudley High School; Matthew Harder, Smith High School; Ken Gordon, Western High School; Lateshia Hawkins, Northeast High School; Justin Scarbro, Page High School; Diana Becker, Middle College at Guilford Technical Community College-Greensboro; Jamie Davis, 9-12 Social Studies Specialist for the district; Stacie Wood, Grimsley High School; Lindsay Dehart, Southeast High School; Kate Connor, Northwest High School; and Julianne Hollingsworth, Eastern High School