



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY

Colombian International Exchange Concludes with Seoul Embassy Visit

A group of Colombian students and teachers recently visited Daegu Middle High School (DMHS) in South Korea as part of an exciting cultural exchange.

The visit by the Colombian delegation, the first of its kind, is the culmination of a year's planning by Fulbright alumna, Dr. Yanilis Romero, and Daegu Middle High School's Ms. Rachel Guilfoyle, who is also a Fulbright alumna. The two educators dreamed up the idea to have Colombian students visit Daegu after Ms. Guilfoyle's visit to Colombia in 2023 during her Fulbright program.

Ms. Guilfoyle's experience as a Fulbrighter helped expand her Global Education knowledge which gave her insight about how Global Education tenets are aligned with 21st-century learning, DODEA's Blueprint and MTSS initiative. That alignment, in part, is the inspiration for this cultural exchange. In creating this international visit with Dr. Romero, Ms. Guilfoyle hopes to ignite teachers' and students' excitement to learn from and with others to think about how to collaborate on a global scale.

"My Fulbright experience created an opportunity to examine educational practice from a holistic and global lens," Ms. Guilfoyle said. "My experience as Teacher of the Year provided teacher-leadership skills needed to facilitate and collaborate across time zones, academic disciplines and languages. In deciding to undertake this endeavor, I knew collaborative support would be essential. This visit took a lot of planning and would not have been possible without the support of so many. I hope the international visit from our Colombian peers made a lasting impact and will inspire others to dream big. I also hope that teachers and students were able to gain new insights, perspectives, and ways of thinking about our roles as not only educators, but also as change agents."

The culmination of the Colombian delegation's visit to Daegu was a meeting at the Colombian Embassy in Seoul with the Colombian Ambassador to South Korea, Honorable Alejandro Pelaez Rodriguez. Ms. Guilfoyle presented the ambassador with a Daegu Middle High School coin as a token of appreciation.

During the embassy visit, the ambassador spoke at length about the importance of global education and reiterated to students that their experiences would be life changing. The ambassador's speech was inspiring, emphasizing the transformative power of global education and the importance of cultural exchange. He gave the

students a call to action to become student leaders and change agents. Answering the call to action for student leadership, DMHS student ambassador, Alexander Kenny, spoke to the ambassador about the importance of peer leadership.

“Each student ambassador was assigned to a student to show them around and be a lunch or classroom buddy,” Kenny said. “The student ambassadors allow kids to be student-leaders and to help any new students to our school—military-connected or international.”

The international collaboration impact as a result of the visit:

- 37 integrated classes (art, music, Street Law, Health, Science etc.)
- 19 Host DMHS teachers (grades 6-12)
- 1 study trip to a local Korean school
- 2 school-wide assemblies (Welcome Ceremony & Hispanic Heritage)
- 5 DMHS tours led by student ambassadors
- 10 Colombian student presentations to DMHS students/classes

The Colombian visit to Daegu Middle High School was a resounding success, leaving a lasting impact on both the visitors and the hosts. It highlighted the importance of cultural exchange in promoting global understanding and cooperation. As the students returned to Colombia, they carried with them cherished memories and a newfound appreciation for Korean and American culture, while leaving a little of Colombia at Daegu Middle High School.