

WCCC teacher brings home lessons on inquiry from Belize trip

Master's degree program lets social studies instructor expand his horizons.

By Ryan Cook
Staff Writer

Most teachers will tell you they have to be fearless when in front of students in their classroom.

Todd Paul took that fearlessness to the extreme this summer during a teacher training trip to the Central American country Belize.

Paul spent the summer feeding tigers from a zoo cage, among other educational activities as part of Miami University's Project Dragonfly, a master's degree program based on the Earth Expeditions program from Dragonfly and the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden.

He recently returned from the Belize trip, where he traveled with 20 other teachers from the region.

Paul, a Warren County Career Center social studies teacher, said the two-week experience taught him about the differences and similarities in the



Warren County Career Center social studies teacher Todd Paul spent two weeks in Belize as part of Miami University's Project Dragonfly, helping teachers earn their master's degrees. Paul is pictured feeding a jaguar at the Belize Zoo. Contributed photos

educational system from the U.S., and more specifically about the inquiry system of learning.

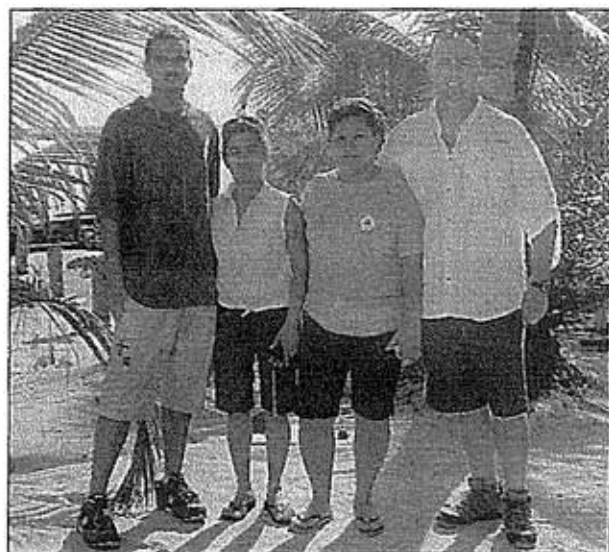
Paul said he wants to bring back the "different and better strategies for inquiry" to his classroom. Although the method is harder to incorporate into social studies than the

sciences, Paul said he will certainly use it when discussing other cultures.

The inquiry method encouraged students to guide their own learning experience by asking questions and doing research, which often leads to more inquisition.

While in Belize, Paul

said he and the group had several unique experiences, such as hiking through the zoo at night, staying in a tropical forest and exploring an ancient Mayan site. He said he enjoyed talking to Belizean teachers who visited them to discuss their educational system, which faces some of the



ABOVE: Paul visited Tobacco Caye island with some Belizean teachers. **RIGHT:** Paul reads to students at Gales Point Government School.

same struggles as the U.S. system in terms of funding and discipline.

Paul said the program requires him to take similar trips in the next two summers, and he hopes to be able to go to Kenya, Thailand and Borneo.

For more information about the program, visit www.ProjectDragonfly.org.



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