



## INCREASING LEARNING AMONG DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

PREAL took eleven young educators from six Latin American countries to Boston, Massachusetts from May 21-25, 2012 for a series of **field trips and workshops** designed to highlight programs that have had success in increasing learning among disadvantaged students.

The study tour sought to:

- expose participants to innovations that they are unlikely to encounter in their own countries;
- reinforce the idea that poor or minority students can achieve high levels of learning;
- illustrate what success with disadvantaged students looks like;
- enable participants to assess the strengths and weaknesses of current efforts on this front; and
- encourage participants to consider the implications of these initiatives for their own countries.

The visit combined field trips to local programs with workshops on key policy issues by professors from Harvard's Graduate School of Education. It was organized around four main themes that are key to education success: **teacher quality, school leadership, student assessments, and school accountability.**

The group visited **charter schools** (KIPP Academy, Roxbury Prep, Boston Green Academy, Match School),



PREAL study tour participants during a visit to Mission Hill K-8 Pilot School.

"The greatest lesson I've learned is that it is possible to achieve better, positive results with students who, for various reasons, have been raised with and live with disadvantages."

– Ana María Hernández,  
Guatemala

**pilot schools** (Orchard Gardens and Mission Hill) and **two programs that recruit and train young professionals** who do not have education degrees to teach in high-need schools (Boston Teacher Residency and Teach for America). Participants were able to see first-hand and discuss how these programs approach student learning, character development, teacher management and school autonomy.

The group also met with representatives of Data Wise and the Strategic Data Project to discuss their **programs for using student performance data to help teachers raise learning.** They met as well with two organizations (Education Pioneers and New Leaders for New Schools) that recruit and train high-quality professionals for careers as leaders and managers in education institutions.

The field visits were complemented by **five workshops** led by professors from Harvard's Graduate School of Education addressing current thinking on: 1) lessons from the U.S. experience (Richard Murnane); 2) promoting school accountability (Martin West); 3) raising teacher quality (Susan Moore Johnson); 4) improving student assessments (Andrew Ho); 5) international evidence on how teachers, school leadership, student assessments, and school accountability can be used to increase student learning (Felipe Barrera-Osorio).

The participants, all of whom were under 40 years of age, held positions in governments, non-governmental organizations and universities in five Central American countries (the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua) and Argentina.

They included:

- Sarah Espailat – Coordinator for Education to Think Program at SEE-CIM-INTEC (Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo); Dominican Republic
- Massiel Cohen – Technical Coordinator for International Studies in the Directorate General of Education Quality Evaluations at the Ministry of Education; Dominican Republic
- Luisa Müller – Director General of Evaluation and Educational Research at the Ministry of Education; Guatemala
- Ana María Hernández – Master’s candidate in Leadership and Education Management at the Universidad del Valle, former first grade teacher; Guatemala
- Yessenia Rodríguez –Coordinator of the president’s Technical Advisory Council for National Consensus and Implementation of the Municipal Councils for Education Development at the Secretary of Education; Honduras
- Dennis Caceres – Director of Education Quality Evaluations at the Secretary of Education and Coordinator of TERCE-LLECE UNESCO; Honduras
- Celina de Sola – Founder and Program Director of Glasswing International, an NGO that works to improve education and public health in Central America; El Salvador
- Ricardo Avelar – Executive Director at CREO, an organization that empowers young adults through education of democratic principles; El Salvador
- Alicia Arteaga – Monitoring Officer for EDUCAN, a project that promotes improved education through better nutrition, at CARE International; Nicaragua
- Isabel Callejas – Coordinator for the Khan Academy Project of the UNO Foundation; Nicaragua
- Mercedes Miguel – General Director of Educational Planning in the Ministry of Education of the City of Buenos Aires; Argentina



Study tour coordinator Alejandro Ganimian speaking to participants.



PREAL study tour participants during a visit to Mission Hill K-8 Pilot School.

On the final day, participants reflected about what the study tour meant to them. Video testimonials can be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2Vh-4FMwoc>.

“The visit to Orchard Gardens was the most striking to me for its history. From the beginning, it was a school with one of the lowest rankings and the worst achievement, and one change was enough to flip its reality. This really called my attention to the ability of school management to change education outcomes.”

– Massiel Cohen, Dominican Republic