

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, USA

BRAZILIAN ENGLISH TEACHERS THRIVE AT TEMPLE UNIVERSITY INTENSIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Twenty-nine Brazilian English teachers this winter attended an intensive six-week program offered by Temple University's Intensive English Language Program (IELP), which was designed to promote best practices in teaching English as a second language (TESOL).

The Brazil English Teachers Program at Temple is sponsored by the New York-based Institute of International Education and CAPES, a foundation within Brazil's Ministry of Education. Those two organizations also are collaborating with both the Fulbright Commission in Brazil and the U.S. Embassy in Brazil.

The Temple participants were among more than 1,600 Brazilian English teachers who have studied at 17 U.S.

colleges and universities since the program began in July 2013. Plans call for more than 1,000 Brazilian English teachers a year for at least three years to participate. Temple's program was designed to:

- strengthen the participants' English
- introduce new online and traditional teaching methodologies
- familiarize them with technologies that can help students reach their learning goals; and
- learn about best practices for assessment and feedback.

The program included listening-and-speaking classes, one-on-one pairings with conversation partners and weekly visits to public and private schools in both Philadelphia

Below: The 29 Brazilian English Teachers proudly sport their Temple University t-shirts!



and its suburbs. "This is going to make a huge difference to my profession, to my teaching," Adriane De Souza Freitas, an English teacher in Rio de Janeiro, said midway through the program. "We are learning lots of new things, such as how to apply technology in our classes."

"Every time we watch different classes I think to myself, 'Wow, how come I didn't think about that?'" added Luana Perondi, who for a decade has taught English to middle school and high school students in São Paulo, South America's largest city.

With Brazil this year hosting the World Cup, soccer's foremost international tournament, and the Summer Olympics in 2016, the Brazil English Teachers Program participants indicated the Brazilian government has made teaching English a priority. "The government wants us English teachers to prepare the population to receive the tourists," said Freitas, who teaches students in elementary school through high school. "Not only Americans but people from all over the world speak English."

Sometimes, however, their students resist. Juliana Pedrosa, who for 17 years has taught English in a middle school in a poor community near São Paulo, said her students do not know the importance of learning English, and there is little family support. Her students tell her: "I barely speak Portuguese, you want me to learn English?"

She responds by showing her students job advertisements, most of which require English. "You have to speak English," she repeatedly tells them.

In addition, Brazilian students are surrounded by English: on their smart phones and via video games, music and movies. The Brazil English Teachers Program gave the teachers a wealth of ideas for utilizing such technology and culture to improve their students' command of English. For example, suggesting to their students that they use their smart phones to text each other in English; assigning them to interview and record English-speaking immigrants; requiring them to create or respond to online blogs written in English; and having them create and collaboratively edit, as part of a group, Wikipedia-like entries in English.

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Above: Photo 1: Liberty Bell, Photo 2: Ben Franklin speaks to the group at the welcome luncheon at City Tavern, Photo 3: Deborah Jotta and Andrea Correa get to know others in the group at the program's orientation.

The teachers were also encouraged to assign their students a variety of small-group, role-playing activities, again in English.

Finally, the Brazilians were immersed in American culture. In addition to a class on U.S. history and culture, they visited New York City and both historic sites and Smithsonian museums in Washington, D.C. They also toured Philadelphia's historic landmarks, attended a Sunday Service at Christ Church and had lunch at the City Tavern with an actor portraying Benjamin Franklin. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, they folded boxes as volunteers with the Share Food Program, a non-profit food relief group.

Experiencing snow for the first time, they tossed around snow, made "snow angels" and, while ice skating at the Independence Blue Cross Rink along

the Delaware River, made a live appearance on the most popular local TV channel's weather report.

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The Brazil English Teachers Program was, in Freitas' words, "a dream come true." When she was 16 she pleaded with her parents to let her come to America as part of a student exchange program. Her father, however, was concerned about how his "princess" would fare alone in a foreign country, and then told her they couldn't afford to pay for the trip. "But I nurtured this dream for 30 years, and now it's come true," she said. "I used to teach history lessons about the Liberty Bell, and when I was face to face with it, I couldn't believe I could see it right in front of me—and I cried."

Added Claudia Barreto, who has taught English to elementary and middle school students for 22 years in Vitória, the capital of the state of Espírito Santo:

Below: Brazil English Teachers Program participants with staff and Brazilian ESL students at Northeast High School.



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The IELP staff was equally complimentary regarding the Brazilian teachers. “They are an incredible group whom we have really enjoyed,” said Stephanie Laggini Fiore, PhD, IELP director. “They were so passionate about the opportunity they had here and were willing to do everything that we asked of them.” For example, they were all ready at 6:30 a.m. to take a bus to visit a suburban school district—including one of the teachers who was confined to a wheelchair after breaking her ankle in the snow.

Fiore hopes that, in the future, Temple can offer the Brazil English Teachers program to more teachers. “We would love to do it again,” she says. “It’s been a great experience.”

- By Bruce E. Beans

Below: The Philadelphia Skyline as seen from Temple University.

