



**Reflecting on Experiences and Lessons Learned:  
Three Perspectives on the *Panamá Bilingüe* Program**

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# Session Outline

- Self-introductions
- Quick facts about the country of Panama
- Overview of the *Panamá Bilingüe* program
- Experiences and lessons learned
  - The national level: Maria
  - The regional level: Kayla
  - The abroad context: Rebecca
- Conclusions/Recommendations
- Discussion/ Q &A



# Panama Facts

Panama's population:

- Just under 4 million, almost 2 million in Panama City

Panama's economy:

- Based on services industry (banking, commerce, tourism)
- The canal generates  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the economy

US relations with Panama:

- Geographical, political, and commercial

Panama's education system:

- 94% literacy rate
- Compulsory through junior high school
- Large schools in urban areas, small multi-grade schools in remote areas
- MEDUCA



# Program Mission



## ¿QUÉ ES PANAMÁ BILINGÜE?

Panamá Bilingüe es una estrategia nacional que nace de la urgente necesidad de preparar a una población de panameños bilingües de manera que nuestro país pueda alcanzar un crecimiento económico exitoso.

Esta iniciativa es especialmente necesaria para promover que la generación trabajadora acceda a los puestos de trabajo que se presentan con el rápido crecimiento económico de Panamá.

El programa está orientado a la implementación de nuevos componentes de formación y capacitación, a fin de mejorar la metodología, actualizar técnicas y estrategias de enseñanza, así como compartir experiencias y recursos didácticos, mediante la asistencia técnica y cooperación internacional.

La meta es promover el aprendizaje del idioma inglés entre la población panameña fomentando una mayor cantidad de oportunidades mejorando la calidad de vida de miles de panameños.

En función de lo anterior, el Programa Panamá Bilingüe se desarrollará en las siguientes acciones:

- Capacitación continua del personal docente.
- Materiales didácticos para la enseñanza del idioma inglés, en los centros educativos de primer y segundo nivel de enseñanza.

# Program Components

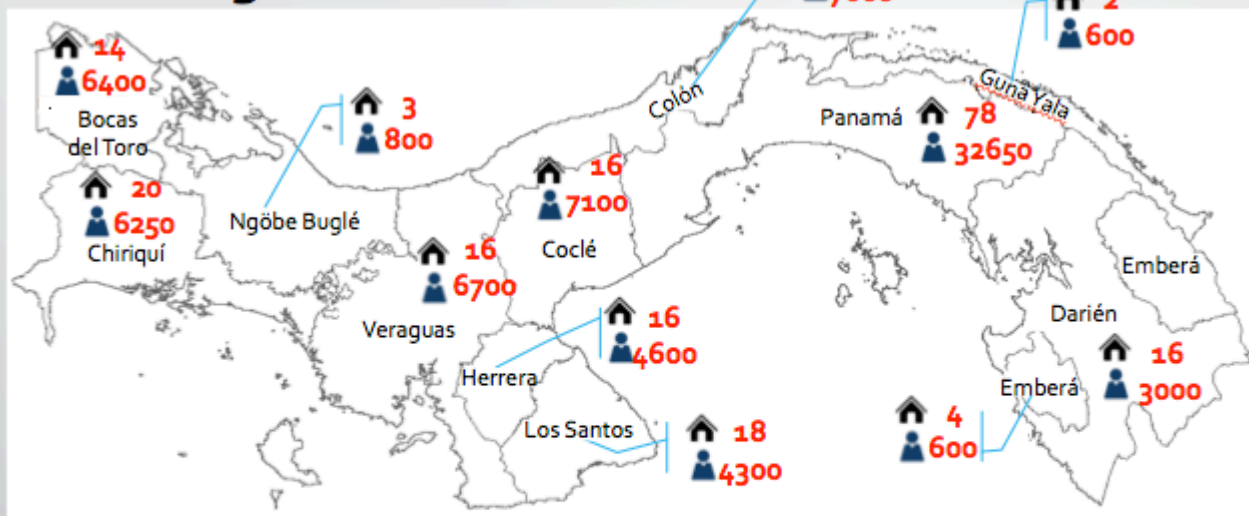
## *Kids*

- Primary schools (PK-6 grades)
- 10 hrs/wk of English (increased from 5 hrs/wk)
- 2 hrs/wk of Science instruction in English
- Projected for future years: Arts, Technology, and PE instruction in English
- Each year, more schools join the program





## Programa Kids-10 Horas



KIDS incorpora a las clases regulares de las escuelas oficiales de educación básica, un plan de educación bilingüe en donde los alumnos se verán beneficiados con un aumento de 5 a 10 períodos de clases semanalmente impartidos en el idioma inglés. Adicionalmente en el 2017, los estudiantes de primer a tercer grado recibirán 2 horas adicionales de clases de ciencias en inglés.

### Kids Program 10 horas

PANAMÁ  
**Bilingue**

Cantidades

Escuelas

218

Alumnos

80,000

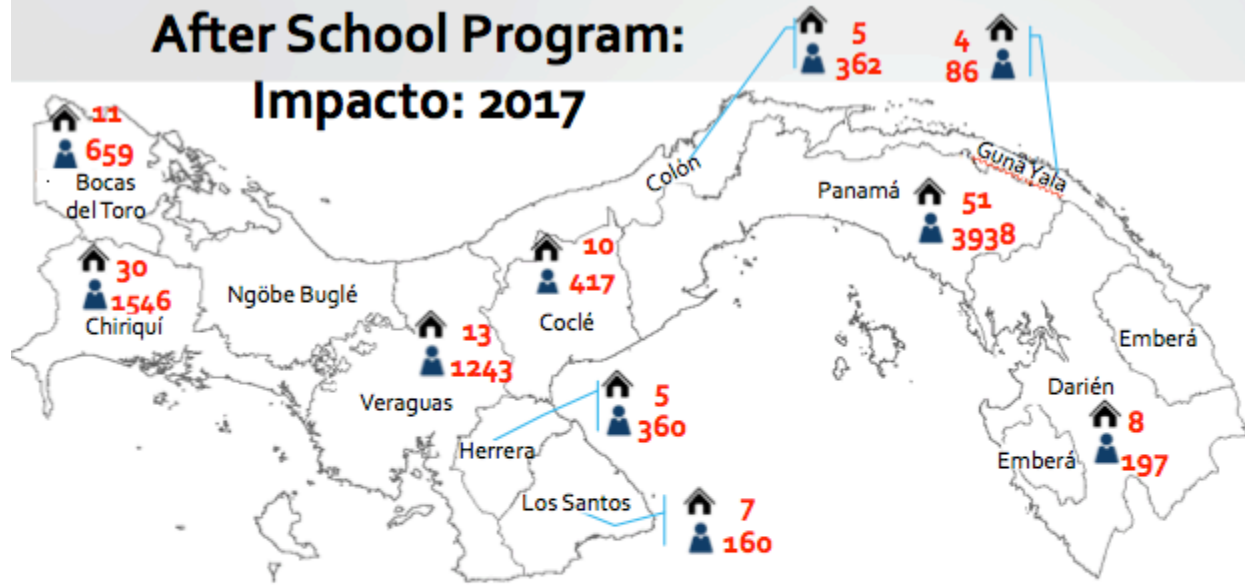
# *After School*



- Secondary schools (7-12 grades)
- 3 hrs of English, 4 days per week, either before or after school
- Delivered on site or in “training centers” (e.g., local universities)
- 300 hours total per year



## After School Program: Impacto: 2017



El After School Program (ASP) busca alcanzar un impacto nacional, mejorando las competencias lingüísticas de los estudiantes de secundaria de escuelas oficiales, en los planteles de Meduca o centros de entrenamiento (Training Centers) a través de la implementación de clases de inglés, en jornada contraria a sus clases regulares.

### After School Program

PANAMÁ  
**Bilingüe**

Cantidades

2017



Escuelas

144



Alumnos

8,968

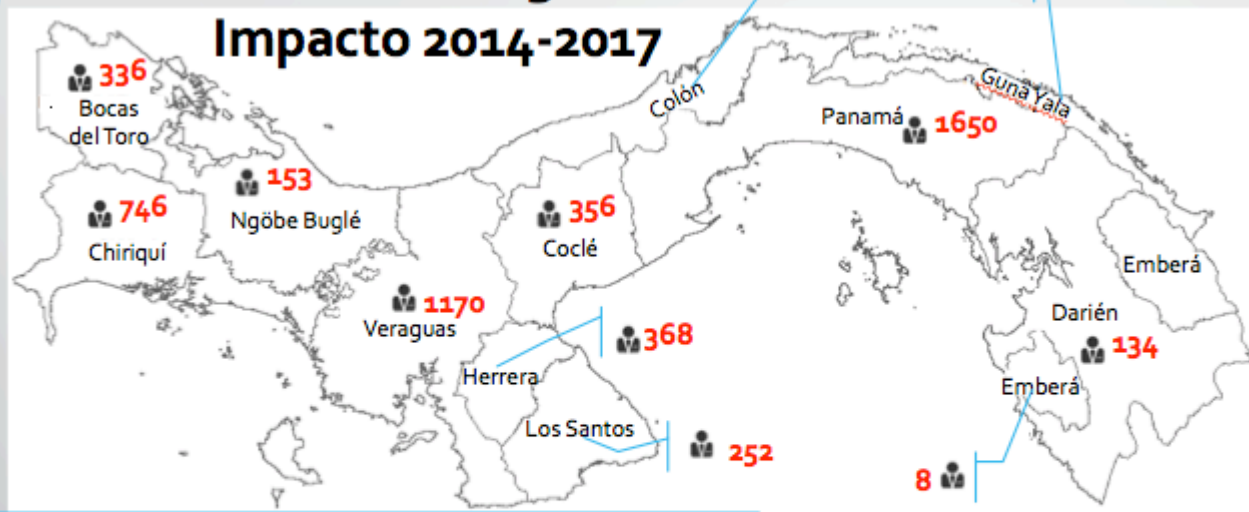


# *Teacher Training: Local*

- “*Back to Basics*” -- intensive 40-hour courses for English teachers already in the public school system – can be taken once a year on different topics
- Intensive 240 hours of English language instruction for students of the Normal School & university students studying English or Education



## Teacher Training Local: Impacto 2014-2017



**Back to Basics y 240 horas** son capacitaciones impartidas a los docentes de inglés y futuros docentes del sistema educativo oficial a nivel nacional con el objetivo de fortalecer los conocimientos y habilidades para impartir clases de inglés como segunda lengua.

### Programa: Teacher Training Local

PANAMÁ  
**Bilingüe**



Participantes

Cantidad

2014-2017

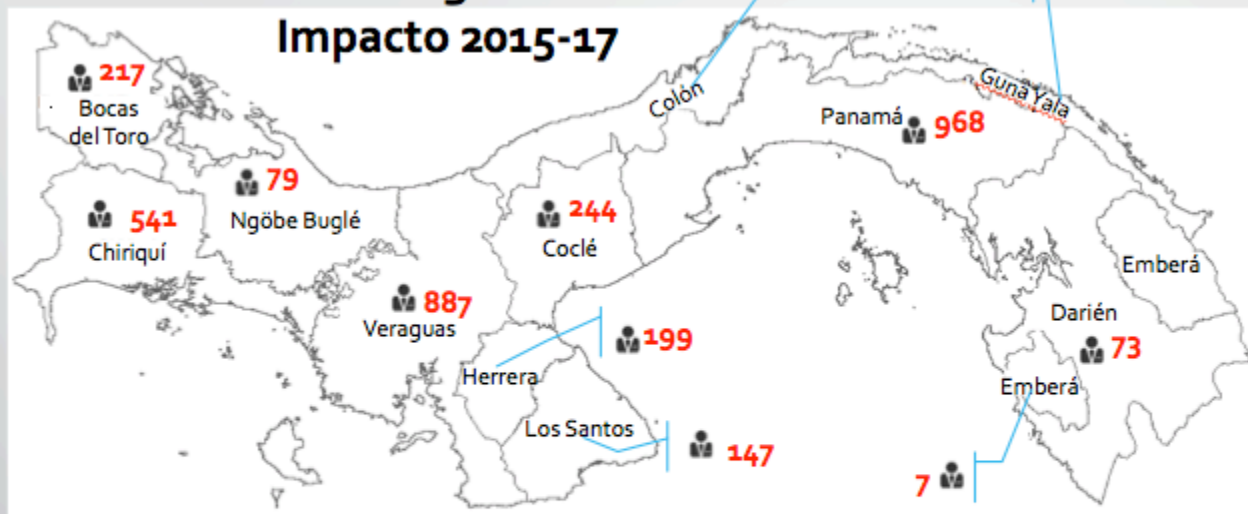
6,672

# *Teacher Training: International*

- Intensive courses of 8 or 16 weeks
- 35 universities in the U.S., the UK, Canada and Barbados



## Teacher Training Internacional: Impacto 2015-17



La capacitación en el extranjero brinda a los participantes estrategias innovadoras de enseñanzas a través de cursos intensivos de inglés en universidades de habla inglesa, mejorando las competencias y desempeño del docente en el aula de clases. La capacitación puede durar de 8 a 16 semanas.

### Programa: Teacher Training Local

PANAMÁ  
**Bilingüe**

Cantidad

2015-2017

Participantes

3,831

# Other Opportunities

- Publishers (under contract) provide textbooks, supplementary materials (e.g., software, CDs), coaching on use of materials
- Regional coordinators provide support, visit schools, organize local trainings
- Online modules for *After School* teachers
- Cambridge online certification (CELT-S)





# National Level

## My role

- Fulbright Scholar working with *Panamá Bilingüe* central office
- Also affiliated with Universidad Latina

## Activities

- Consulting/support for National Coordinators and Regional Coordinators in the Panama City area
- Professional development sessions
- Classroom-based ethnographic research



# Consulting/Support

- Regular meetings and consultations (e.g., coordinators, publisher reps, school principals, union representatives)
- Interviewer in different provinces (prospective teachers & study abroad candidates)
- Pilot assessment sessions with students
- Evaluation of textbooks for adoption
- *Panamá Bilingüe* Congress – panel presentation



# Professional Development



- Intensive 40-hour “*Back to Basics*” trainings for teachers (offered in January, June and September)
- Development of Online Training Modules for After-school teachers
- Various other PD sessions for coordinators and teachers in Panama City and in Santiago



Ruth Castillo Jul 17, 2017; 8:29am Re: MODULE 1: Making Learning Fun [Reply](#) | [Threaded](#) | [More](#) ▾

 2 posts

In reply to [this post](#) by Maria Dantas-Whitney



Students loved the activity of PHOTO WALK they felt free to write sentences describing the pictures. In this case I used flashcards but the next time I would ask them to bring their photos. Also, we developed the Facebook wall activity where they expressed their interests on living in an apartment or house relating the activity with the topic itself.!

# Classroom-based Research

- Ethnographic research – participating in classroom culture
- Collaboration with one teacher in *Kids* and *After School* programs
- Classroom visits 2 or 3 times per week
- Interactions with children, parents, principal, other teachers/staff members
- Allowed me to experience the enactment of language policy at the classroom level



# Reflections

- Positive impact is evident in classrooms and in teachers' attitudes/desire to learn
- Great number of initiatives being rolled out at once: appreciation for hard work
- Political nature of the program: constant need to justify efforts; threat to sustainability
- Teachers hired as academic instructors creates some inequities in the system
- Goal of country's economic growth: "Whose interests will be served?" (Early, 2017)



# Lessons Learned

- Listen, observe, ask questions, build trust slowly
- Once trust is built, more opportunities for collaboration/support will arise
- Acknowledge limitations of outsider role
- Build relationships with a variety of stakeholders
- Show willingness to collaborate. Say “yes” to requests, even at the last-minute
- Be flexible and comfortable with ambiguity

# Regional Level

## My Role

- English Language Fellow, U.S. Department of State
- Parent of students in Kids 10

## My Location

La Escuela Normal  
Juan Demostenes Arosemena  
Santiago de Veraguas



# Regional Level



## Participants

- Regional English Supervisor
- Panama Bilingue Coordinators
- Teachers of Kids and After School Programs
- Teachers at La Escuela Normal (English and other content areas)
- Future teachers at La Escuela Normal

# Regional Level

## Structure of Program

- School visits
- Classroom observations
- Coaching
- Professional Development



- Conducted independently and alongside regional coordinators

# Regional Level

## Professional Development Sessions



Conducted needs assessment and focused on:

- Student-centered teaching
- Communicative methods
- SIOP model background and planning
- Basic English for content areas
- Bilingual methods for content areas



# Regional Level

## Professional Development Sessions

- Used SIOP model planning for every presentation
- Modeled lessons using program materials
- Invited teachers to observe model classes
- Participants completed adapted SIOP checklist/lesson planning sheet during session



# Regional Level

## Successes



- Built relationships and cultivated trust first
- Provided background so that teachers could understand the “why”
- Achieved buy-in from teachers
- Observed increased student-centered teaching and improved communicative methods
- Cooperation with individuals involved in a variety of capacities

# Regional Level



Lessons learned and recommendations for next steps:

- Advocate for cooperation of different invested parties
- Provide opportunities for teachers to showcase and share their expertise
- Assist with curriculum development

# Abroad - Context

- Two-month international intensive professional development program for in-service English teachers from Panama (3 groups of ~20 / year) including:
  - English language development
  - Methodology and Practice
  - School Visits
  - Cultural Visits
  - Lodging
  - Food
  - Transportation



# Abroad - Context

Program contents and design informed by:

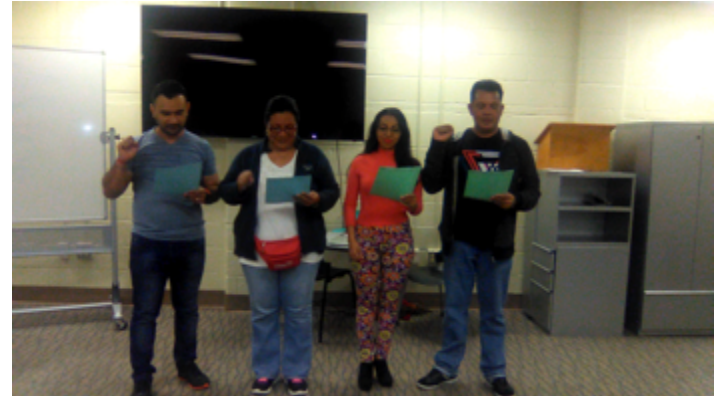
- Panama Bilingüe / MEDUCA guidelines
- Alignment to TESOL Standards
  - English Language Proficiency
  - Culture
  - Assessment
  - Professionalism
  - Technology
  - Planning, Implementing, and Managing Instruction
- American University TESOL Program structure and courses



# Abroad - Context

How do we operationalize it?

- English language proficiency
  - 12 hours/week of integrated skills, project-based learning
    - News presentations - Vocabulary
    - Weekly reading logs
    - Color Vowel approach
    - Grammar review and practice
    - Reader's Theater
    - Writing Project
    - Digital Story



- **English as the principal medium of instruction and communication**



# Abroad - Context

How do we operationalize it?

## Methodology and Practice

- Theory: bilingualism, sociolinguistics, & intercultural communication
- Planning, Implementing, and Managing Instruction
  - Student-centered learning activities
  - **Opportunities for Ss to produce, reflect on, and get feedback on language**
  - **Scaffolding**
  - Critical thinking
  - Classroom management
  - Materials design and adaptation
  - Timing
  - Lesson planning (SIOP and others)



# Abroad - Context

How do we operationalize it?

## Methodology and Practice (continued)

- Assessment
  - Analyses and adaptations of existing tools
  - Designing new assessments
  - Rubrics and other feedback mechanisms
  - Inter-rater reliability
  - Validity, bias, impact, practicality, & authenticity (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010)
- Technology for teaching and learning
- Professionalism and Professional Development
  - Communities of practice and participation in local conferences
  - Reflective self-assessment
  - Peer observation and coaching



# Abroad - Successes

In a May, 2017 survey of 76 AU PB alumni, teachers reported:

- Using more student interaction and engagement in their lessons.
- Using more English in their classes.
- Using more student-centered activities and authentic, communicative language teaching practices
- Higher confidence in the classroom and with their colleagues and supervisors

# Abroad - Evolution

- Since the beginning of the program in 2015, we have:
  - Revised our program to increase the amount of activity demonstrations and feedback teachers do with us
  - Provided more opportunities for teachers to plan and practice together using new strategies, materials, and concepts
  - Added many new classroom activities and tools that teachers can apply directly in the classroom immediately upon their return
  - Changed the structure of the program to better align with teachers' needs in Panama
  - Provided more direct follow-up with returned teachers

# Abroad - Next Steps

- In the future we will:
  - Replicate and expand our impact study
  - Compare teachers who came to AU with teachers from other universities' programs, and with teachers who have not participated in the Panama Bilingüe Program.
  - Provide more structured online follow-up support to alumni of our program.

# Conclusions/Recommendations

- Expect learning to occur on both sides
- Capitalize on teachers' experience and personal practical knowledge
- Provide a theoretical foundation and a research base to help teachers understand why certain classroom practices are beneficial and desirable
- Provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate in teams and create networks of support and advocacy
- Encourage teachers to engage in self-reflection and critical inquiry

(Cirocki & Farrell, 2017; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2012; Walqui, 2011)