June 18th, 2018- Beijing Royal School (BRS)

When we arrived at Beijing Royal School today, we were all electrified with the anticipation that educators have on the first day of school. It is a feeling that no other profession can identify with. It was present for us all, a force that beckons those with a calling like nothing else. As we stepped off the bus, our group was welcomed with a sincere admiration from the beginning, one that was continuously met as we were greeted by the administration, the teachers, and the students of BRS. There was an excitement similar to the feelings that we all experienced as we began our climb up the Great Wall of China, but it was different. It was unique in the sense that today was a day that we had all dreamed of in our individual paths as educators. While we checked the “bucket list” box for the Great Wall, teaching in a foreign county, in China, at a school like BRS, brought about a very different feeling of accomplishment. How many people had the opportunity to climb the Great Wall of China? Probably more human beings than we could count, and while it was humbling, it was minimized by our collective passion for our profession and the opportunity in which we were all about to engage.
We began a process of introductions and photo shoots which matched the excitement we were all feeling and as we glanced upwards in celebration and appreciation, we noticed the LED sign lighting up the ancient styled courtyard, “A Warm Welcome to the Teachers Delegation with Go Global NC.” After several minutes of strategic photography, we began our exploration of the BRS. As we approached the Confucius statue, standing proudly in the far end of the center courtyard, young elementary children began filing in, wearing red t-shirts and blue polo shirts sporting the BRS emblem. They formed directed lines and looked attentively at a small girl - the “captain” of the morning and the leader of the soon to be practiced calisthenics - standing afoot of the “ancient one”. And then it began, as a stalwart voice echoed the repeated numbers of “y, er, san si, wu”, children began their exercise program. The scene was a fantastic beginning to the day, one that was expected, and dreamed about, as well as mysterious in its difference from the way our schools begin.

As the children slowly trickled off to their respective classrooms, a group of students began a game of elimination jump rope. Filled with the excitement of a 1st grader, we joined in and for a moment lost all sense of professionalism as we relinquished our selves and souls to the unknown. It was triumphant, and for a moment, all of humanity smiled. The journey then took us from a sense of comfort and camaraderie to one that reminded us of some of the imitations of public education that we work with on a daily basis back home - lack of adequate facilities for all students. Our tour was shocking, to say the least, a far cry from the lines of desks and technological neglect that many NC public schools face due to limitations of funding. There were “mobile desks”, satellite classrooms with motion sensor cameras, an NBA regulation gymnasium, a state of the art theater, a library complete with dozens of Mac desktops, a 1-to-1 iPad to student ratio-overall, and a huge financial commitment to excellence.
We then circled back to a meeting room, where we all met collectively to hear the story of Beijing Royal School founder, Mr. Wang Guifang’s, vision for a better world, one initiated by beneficent cupidity, the belief in the power of institutional transformation, and a dedication to bridging the perceived chasm between China and the United States. As I watched the presentation of BRS and listened to the inspirational words of Mr. Wang, I was reminded of the epiphany I experienced 15 years ago on the day I “answered the call” to return to my entelechy of becoming a teacher. This actualization, achieved by all of us in the group, resonated in the words of support and invitation issued by Mr. Wang. We ALL realized ourselves as engaged citizens of the world and our classrooms became the interconnection of the human condition and its vast array of experiences. While China was the beginning for some of us, for others it was the continuation of a strongly held belief that travel broadens our perspective and helps to create empathetic and understanding human beings.
China has always been a word to me, an idea, that jumped off the pages of my world history textbook in its stories of Qin Shi Huang Di, the Han Dynasty, the Silk Road, and the world trade dominance of silk, tea, and porcelain. It also literally transformed my life in its lessons of Taoism and Confucianism and my desire to be a “Jun-Zi” with a desired ability to be “wu-wei”. I remember the calming force of the Tao, as I restlessly attempted to gain balance in the yin/yang and apply this to my own life many years ago. As I shared my sentiments with the students of BRS, like my colleagues did as well, we poured ourselves into a land and its youth that welcomed us and accepted us.
And as we walked away from the hallways of BRS, we realized that our role on this path had just begun. Our next goal would be to continue the bridge whose foundation was established by Go Global NC and whose responsibility it was now ours to carry home - to our schools, to our families, and to our communities. China was a dream and a distant land of history and mystery, that had become a world of opportunity and partnership in creating the future we desired. As educators who share a passion for global immersion and international mindedness, we were artists whose profession could create the image of how our two great nations could lead each other into tomorrow. In the end, I believe we felt the charge, and we have all begun to accept the call.

Let Plato be your friend, and Aristotle, but more let your friend be truth.

与亚里士多德为友，与柏拉图为友，更与真理为友。

——校训