

Eighth Grade Trip to Puerto Rico

Guiding Questions:

- How is life in Puerto Rico the same as life in Connecticut and how is it different?
- What is the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States?
- What are Puerto Rico's resources and what are its current challenges?
- Do I have a responsibility to the world outside my own community?
- How can getting involved in other places in the world enrich my own life?

Overview:

As eighth grade students, we hope you have experienced first hand the benefits of contributing to your community here at WMS. Your willingness to extend yourselves has been noticed and our community has benefitted from what each of you has contributed.

How can we extend this community involvement outside the walls of WMS? Do we really have a responsibility to involve ourselves with the faraway world? This year we will get to know a culture in some ways very different from our own. Puerto Rico is 1,700 miles south of Connecticut, a territory of the United States of America, but one where the people speak Spanish and the culture reflects this. How did Puerto Rico become a territory? What does it even mean to be a territory...and why do the people of Puerto Rico speak Spanish? Despite a variety of interesting differences, our time in Puerto Rico will remind us once again that human beings have the same basic needs, hopes and dreams for their lives, no matter where they live.

Plans:

From April 15-20 our eighth grade class will travel to San Juan, Puerto Rico to work side by side with students from the Nueva Escuela Montessori School. We will learn about the history and culture of Puerto Rico in old San Juan and spend time exploring Puerto Rico's sub-tropical rain forest, El Yunque. The focus of our trip, however, will be connecting to the people of this island; practicing our Spanish, extending ourselves in a positive manner...and helping in whatever way we can.

Questions to think about:

- What do you know about how people live in other places?
- What's the same and what's different?
- What's good about what's different? What's good about what's the same?

What are the benefits of traveling and getting to experience other places and cultures?
How might that help the world?
How might that help you?

March 5: Research Project: (to be done in pairs)

Topics to choose from:

Map: Make a topographic map of Puerto Rico.... Places we intend to go should be included

El Yunque

Puerto Rican Art

Puerto Rican Music/ Dance

Puerto Rican Literature: poetry, short stories

Puerto Rican Food

US/Puerto Rico history and relationship

Spanish history and influence

Puerto Rican government and politics

Current Events: environmental issues and issues of social justice

April 2: notes due

April 9: Present research to each other (informal presentations, but a visual is required)

Practical Life on the trip:

The importance of TRUST

Supporting each other, supporting the chaperones

Airplane etiquette and behavior

The value of flexibility: things never go as planned!

Saying please and thank you

Rules for the cabins

City Life: respect and responsibility

Communication: in Spanish and non-verbal

Food: what to expect, what to do if you don't like it

Cooking and cleaning up after ourselves

Common physical responses to travelling—eating, sleeping, missing home

Hard work: how to support each other

