



International Summer Research or Residency Award

Yasmina Haddad, 2024
Migrant Education in Brazil
Educational Policy Studies

This summer, I spent 5 weeks conducting classroom observations and interviews at a local, public elementary school in the northeast of Brazil. The school is a ~3 hour drive from the Brazil/Venezuela border. In recent years, there has been an influx of Venezuelan migrants to Brazil. At the time of my trip, I was told that upwards of 400 Venezuelans were entering the country each day, with the number expected to increase later in the summer depending on the outcome of Venezuela's elections. The school I spent time in was staffed completely by Brazilian nationals and the student population was nearly 80% Venezuelan students. While some students had been at the school for a few years, others arrived during my time there.

While at the school, I learned so much from the students and the teachers. The students graciously taught me Portuguese, constantly correcting my pronunciation and vocabulary in the most loving way. The teachers were incredibly patient with me and my "Portuñol" and took time to get to know me during the students' snack break. Two teachers in particular opened their classroom doors to me and let me spend the 5 weeks with them and their students. A Brazilian art professor in town was especially welcoming. She introduced me to the people at the school and showed me around town. One of my favorite days during my trip was when I "helped" her and her students paint a mural at the school. While they were the true artists, I was there to essentially paint by numbers and to add more colors to the school.

During my time there (and ever since leaving), I have been reflecting on the experiences of migrant students worldwide – especially those who move to countries where they have to learn a new language to make it through their day-to-day lives. I am also always thinking about the factors that are out of people's hands that often make them leave their homes in hopes of building a better life elsewhere. In my classes this semester, I am diving into the academic literature on these topics and I hope to bring together what I experienced and learned at the school in Brazil with what academia "knows" to, hopefully, make some sort of meaningful contribution to the ongoing conversation.

