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TEACHER JOE GEIST RETURNS FROM TWO YEARS IN RIO DE JANEIRO

SAME BOOK DIFFERENT CHAPTER

High school sweethearts, Joe and Katie Geist went on a two-year teaching abroad trip to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

J. Geist taught Communication Arts at BV West two years ago. While he was in Brazil, he blogged about what he and his wife were experiencing as teachers and tourists.

"We were just lucky enough that it worked out for us," Geist said.

Geist and his wife had wanted to study abroad during college, but did not have the chance. They both received a leave of absence from Blue Valley, which allowed them to go teach in Brazil, and then return to their jobs.

While in Brazil, the Geists made new friends with their doorman, the other teachers, and the students. They taught at an international school where they were able to relate to the students, who were also newcomers to the country. The school had about 1,000 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Mrs. Geist taught first grade in the room across from Mr. Geist.

"Your brain is so amazing at that age. [The first graders] would come in with no English; a month after they started coming to the school, they'd already be speaking English. Then, by the end of the year, they'd be speaking and writing fluently in English," Geist said.

Geist taught a speech class in

the "high school," a writing specific class called Communication Arts, and an English class to seventh graders. He was the only seventh grade English teacher at the school.

Every year, the sixth, seventh, and eighth graders took a week-long field trip. During Geist's first year at the school, he and his seventh grade English students took their fieldtrip to the interior of Brazil.

Geist and the students new to Brazil were able to learn about the colonial period of Brazil that included slavery. The scenery included mountains and waterfalls which was a new experience for Geist and the students alike.

Throughout the week-long fieldtrip, Geist was able to bond with his students.

"I was able to really get to know my kids, on a deeper level," Geist said.

While living in Brazil, the Geists made unforgettable friends. But, like every story, there had to be an ending.

"Leaving was not easy, it was painful," Mr. Geist said. "Like getting a really bad shot in the arm at the doctor."

One chapter of their story closed, another one reopened.



The international school where the Geists worked is surrounded by the Tijuca Rainforest, the world's largest urban rainforest. Mrs. Geist's room was right across from Mr. Geist's room.

Geists's students hike on Gold Trail in Tiradentes, Brazil, on the fourth day of the fieldtrip. The sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classes go on one big fieldtrip every year.

Joe Geist and four of his seventh graders pose for a group picture. They went on a week-long fieldtrip to center of Brazil. The students and Geist learned much about the history of Brazil and its people.

The Geists pose for a picture on the Pedra de Gavea Mountain, the second highest peak in Rio. The view overlooks the Atlantic Ocean, and the neighborhood that the Geists lived in, Leblon.

