

# Dr. Deborah Fields Travels the World | ITLS

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Picture from left to right: University of Helsinki faculty Kristina Kumpalanien and Anu Kajamaa with Deborah Fields

Dr. Deborah Fields recently went around the world (literally!) presenting and teaching about her research in constructionist learning in practice.

Her first stop was the University of Helsinki in Finland, where the Learning, Culture and Interventions group invited her to present work on learning by debugging. She shared teaching practices, curriculum design, peer collaboration, and “debugging by design” techniques all centered around learning from bugs/mistakes. This is based on her National Science Foundation-sponsored research with Yasmin Kafai, creating and studying the implementations of the e-textiles for Exploring Computer Science curriculum (freely available at <http://exploringcs.org/e-textiles>).

Dr. Andy Walker, ITLS department head, said curriculum published as a result of funded research results in impacts well beyond the funding cycle.

"It's the kind of thing that NSF loves because they can highlight it to justify and argue for additional funding from legislators," Walker said.

Next she arrived in Bangkok, Thailand at the Darunsikkalai School of Innovation and

Learning (DSIL). With Teachers College professor Paulo Blikstein, Fields co-taught a weeklong professional development for 20 Thai teachers, specifically about how to apply constructionism in practice. Constructionism is a philosophy of learning-by-making interest-driven projects in a supportive community. While many teachers are interested in using this philosophy in their classrooms, they struggle to know how to apply it in practice. Dr. Fields shared some techniques developed in the e-textiles curriculum, of balancing content and projects, supporting peer pedagogy and honoring process as well as products of learning, while providing one-on-one support to teachers in building and presenting lesson plans. It was her sixth workshop in Thailand in three years!

"The fact that Debbie is equally at ease with researchers and can get invited back for a second and third workshop with practitioners is not all that common and truly embodies what our field is all about," Walker said.

Finally, Deborah stopped in Taiwan on the way home to meet (for the first time in person) online ITLS student Emily Jensen, an elementary school English teacher, and to reconnect with Dr. Mingfong Jan, Associate Professor at National Central University, Taiwan, who specializes in design thinking and games in education.

"Our students make big sacrifices to come to Logan, Utah for a three-day orientation at the beginning of their programs, sometimes traveling from halfway around the world," Walker said. "It's no surprise to me that a world class scholar like Dr. Fields would take time out of her travel schedule to return the favor."