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Principals from Brazil visit Schools here provide ideas to take home

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A group of Brazilian school principals recently visited the Kenton County School District for several days as part of a Fulbright program.

The international program sponsored by the U.S. government is designed to "increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries," according to the Fulbright Web site.

The principals spent a day each at Twenhofel Middle School in Taylor Mill, River Ridge Elementary in Villa Hills and Summit View Elementary in Independence observing how their American counterparts conduct school.

Alexandre Lucena Lobo is principal of a rural school of 392 students 100 miles south of the country's capital, Brasilia. He said one thing that caught his attention was the number of signs on the walls pointing out school rules.

"Rules are displayed at the teacher's discretion," Lobo said. "I would like to implement the U.S. practice of displaying the rules in my classrooms.

"I see that I have not been as assertive with students and teachers, and this will change the attitude of my school to prepare my students for a globalized world. In the U.S., this is well done."

Sandra Luzia Ferreira Reis is principal of an elementary and middle school in Rio de Janeiro. Her student body of 650 range in age from 5 to 60. Leaving school to work is common in Brazil. The non-traditional students are dropouts returning to finish.

Like Lobo, she said she will also implement the discipline she saw at River Ridge.

"I also enjoyed the visual communication," she said. "In general, the different visual and learning techniques were beneficial to see."

The principals also liked the school's infrastructure and level of family participation.

"It was confirmed for us that U.S. students are serious about their studies and in general the seriousness of the school system and educational excellence," Lobo said.

"We also did not know the amount of attention paid to ESL (English as a second language) students or the diversity of students that are here."

Elaine Jarchow, dean of the college of education and human services at Northern Kentucky University, said the Fulbright hosting opportunity is a competitive process.

"NKU joined the Kenton County schools and competed successfully to host the three award-winning Brazilian principals," Jarchow said.

"Each principal won the award in his or her state by being the principal of a high-performing school."

Jarchow said the visits help the university because they "broaden our perspective of the world."

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