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SET YOURSELF APART

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

SCHOOLS

At the private school, CORAL, my Buffalo State partner and I wanted to teach the second graders, but we spoke only basic Spanish and they spoke no English. We quickly scrapped our plan and taught more naturally using the two verbs we knew how to conjugate. The students were engaged and we felt so good after that first lesson!



Nicole with children at CORAL School (above left), playing games with girls at Mariposa DR Foundation (above right), and ziplining with fellow teacher candidates (bottom).

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HISTORY

We traveled through the mountains to visit the home (now museum) of the Mirabal sisters, who were assassinated for their opposition to the Trujillo regime. This was one of my most compelling reasons for wanting to participate in the program -- I had read Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* in high school and again during our pre-travel course and was mesmerized by the sites I read about. It was powerful to see and learn more firsthand.

"By avoiding Netflix and not texting people back home I was forced to get to know my roommates and compelled to explore the local community. It was so beneficial. Leave your 'creature comforts' at home and go into this experience with a flexible mentality."

LANGUAGE

This trip reaffirmed my commitment to the 4+1 TESOL program at Buffalo State. My plan to use DuoLingo everyday fell through so I went to the DR ready to learn, but without much knowledge of the language. I was nervous about working with students who don't speak English but, through Spanish lessons with Mary Jane at the Mariposa DR Foundation, I realized there are effective strategies for teaching English Language Learners even without knowing their native languages. I am still intent on becoming bilingual and eventually want to obtain a long-term teaching position outside of the U.S. and immerse myself in another culture. For now, I'm so excited that, starting in June 2018, I will be spending 27 months with the Peace Corp teaching ESL to junior high school students in Burkina Faso!