SET YOURSELF APART
CHILE

Bryanna Hill

Undergraduate Student, Elementary Education & Reading
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LANGUAGE

After taking numerous classes for my concentration, I thought I knew a lot of Spanish. I quickly learned that I was wrong! Chilean Spanish is very distinct - word meanings are different from what I was taught and I was very confused. I spent a day with my PenPal and her friend and couldn't understand their conversations. It made me imagine how difficult it might be for a child who doesn't speak English to make friends in the U.S. By the end of the 3 weeks I had adapted and was speaking Chilean Spanish, but I now have more empathy and am committed to making sure that language learners in my classrooms will feel comfortable.

CULTURE

There are so many things you learn during these IPDS travel experiences that cannot be taught but must be experienced firsthand. I learned how to submerge myself into a culture.

In Chile you greet others with a hug and a kiss, which is not something I do at home. So I had to learn to follow this tradition so that I wouldn't inadvertently disrespect someone. When you are in different cultural situations you need to pay attention and follow the norm before you begin to share aspects of your own culture. You cannot assume that your own habits and traditions are universally known. Study before you go so you have some understanding of what to expect, and keep an open mind while abroad.

FRIENDSHIP

Months before traveling we became PenPals with Chilean teacher candidates. They visited Buffalo in the spring and taught us about their culture and school system. One of my favorite moments was spending a weekend at my PenPal's house - eating choripan, watching soccer and sightseeing. I really enjoyed having a PenPal because she showed me aspects of the country & culture that only a Chilean could share.

Bryanna with local students (above), sightseeing with her PenPal, Daniela (left), and enjoying street art in Valparaiso (right).
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