

Summer 2005
Internship Site – Colegio Espanol, Rosario, Argentina

Spending two months in Rosario, Argentina – a city of one million along the Parana River – to fulfill an IE3 internship as an ESL teacher was a privilege. I had a lot of support from the beginning of my experience in Rosario. On my first day at the internship site, the Director of International Programs at the University of Rosario, Maria Nelida de Juano, and I met with the Director of the English Department of Colegio Espanol and my internship supervisor, Cecilia Acquarone. I was expecting a formal job interview, but it was informal and we discussed my work schedule, expectations to speak English around the ESL students, and I met some of my co-workers, the other English teachers.

One of my biggest challenges at my internship came the first week I was there. I had requested to Cecilia a specific type of schedule where I could work with one group of kids for a longer period of time than just one day, as the previous intern had experienced. My skills of assertiveness were tested and we addressed the problem soon enough. I was happy with the schedule a fellow teacher and I worked out together.

I worked in the mornings from around 7:45 to 12:15 five days a week at Colegio Espanol, when the English program is taught. My co-workers were the twelve English teachers and my supervisor. The ages of kids I interacted with were in all the English-taught grades, kindergarten of age 5 to grade 7 of age 12. I typically attended three to four classes a day and I worked with the same group of students, (there are 3-5 English groups/classes in each grade) same grade per week. The goal was for me to attend every class and work with each of the 530 students to help them learn English – that was achieved.

My tasks were to accompany and assist the English teacher in class and I helped plan and collaborate activities or lessons pertaining to what the children were studying in class. At the beginning of each week, I introduced myself to the new children and they had opportunities to practice speaking English by asking me questions to get to know me. I only spoke Spanish in the staff room with other teachers. In the free hours that I was not in the classroom, I observed in the special education classroom and I worked on an individual project of categorizing teacher materials.

I wish I had been more assertive about my expectations for working with the special education children, to interact more. Since I was at the internship for a short period of time, and only limited to a few times to work with these kids, as well as the difficulty lining up our schedules, I did not get the opportunity to participate more than smile and watch the aide assist the kids one on one.

The length of the internship was a challenge in itself. I suggest that the summer internship be approached differently in the future. Eight weeks flew by and the recommended twelve weeks for an intern I believe is easier for all of us. My supervisor noted that an intern for a short time makes extra work for the staff. If the intern arrived in the middle of June and was able to get settled for a few weeks before their two-week vacation in the middle of July, then this would allow for a longer internship and more transition time between the end of the internship and the start of fall term. The two-week vacation would also give the intern an opportunity to travel and take advantage of exploring and taking longer trips, more than what I was able to do on the weekends. I felt uneasy asking for days off to travel around the weekends, but my supervisor and the teachers were understanding and encouraged me to experience Argentina's beautiful travel ventures.

Since I worked only in the mornings at Colegio Espanol, I was interested in helping teach English in the afternoons at a low-income public school distinct from Colegio Espanol's superior education. My experience at Hogar Maternal one day a week worked out well after a little bump at the beginning once I told them in which capacity it would be best for me to assist. The myriad differences of the two schools challenged my attitude and expectations of the students, e.g. the level of English was greatly different between the two schools due to resources, materials, instruction, and student motivation. I am thankful for both opportunities to view Argentina's public and private education system.

I am thankful for the mentors that helped me along the way. There were a few informal times I talked with my supervisor, Cecilia, but I gained most support from the teachers I collaborated with. Maria Nelida was a huge cultural and emotional support and made sure my internship got off to a good start. I am most grateful for the lucky placement of my host family. Not only were they conveniently located five blocks from my internship site, but my two host parents shared a strong interest in my work and my life, and they cared for me as an independent adult with occasional and very helpful guidance. I would not have been able to navigate the city and travel as easily without their help. I also improved my Spanish with them as I did not practice it much at work.

Although I had very minor conflicts at work and home during my internship, I advise future interns that it is critical to address any problems as soon as they arise, for their own stability and positive experience and those involved.

A huge benefit to living abroad is to learn about yourself, and I did so living and working abroad. I learned about my capabilities in the classroom, what children respond to well, and how

best to assess their work and negotiate their unpredictableness. I am studying speech pathology and I know these lessons will expand into and inspire my professional practicum and career.

Children are wonderful, shining sources of light. I love working with them and being surprised by them. I fell in love with Argentina and all its beauty and food (world's best beef, empanadas, dulce de leche, and delicious bakeries on every street corner) not just because of the children, but every person I met. As I learned about the country's political structure and concerns during my stay, I was further convinced Argentines are strong and warm-hearted individuals and their open nature and European culture were very inviting. I can only hope I left a small percentage of this impression they gave me on the kids I taught. They learned about Oregon and the United States through maps, travel brochures, games, and activities. They tasted peanut