

Study Abroad Report from Rebecca Hull

3rd year Bachelor of Education Primary 2005

Before my exchange I had always had a desire to travel but never the opportunity or finances to go. I was also bored with the routine of my life and looking for a change to help me learn more about myself and become more independent. When the opportunity came up to not only travel to another country but also to live and study there it was something that I could not pass up.

Going on exchange has been the most rewarding and possibly greatest experience of my life. Personally, I have come home with a greater understanding of Australia and how being Australian impacts my identity in ways I had never thought about. As I have never lived away from home this experience apart from my family and being entirely independent has given me greater confidence in knowing that I can handle more than I thought I could. Everything I gained personally from the exchange will also in one way or another influence my role as a teacher.

In terms of academics the classes I took matched up to those I would have taken at Deakin so no extra time was added to my course. I found the classes in America engaging and relevant, offering a different perspective to primary education but also being relevant enough to build on what I had already learnt at Deakin. My teachers were extremely helpful and friendly not only in terms of my assignments but also going out of their way to make me feel at home in a foreign country. Another academic positive is that being able to put this experience on my resume will greatly benefit me when I apply for a job. The experience has definitely impacted on the type of teacher I will become and I have a whole other set of resources to draw from once I start teaching. I have also planned to keep in contact with teachers I met in America to hopefully set up pen pals between our classrooms.

People have asked me since I got back what was my favourite part of the exchange and every time I tell them that that is impossible to answer. I had so many once in a lifetime experiences that I can happily say I enjoyed every minute of my exchange. I loved the university life in America and the different atmosphere that you get from Australia. I loved meeting new people and the fact that I am still in contact with friends that I made there. I loved travelling to places that I have only ever dreamed of and seeing the Statue of Liberty, the Grand Canyon, Central Park, Lake Michigan and the Hollywood sign. I loved walking to school in the snow and being amazed at how far removed that is from my life in Australia. Even the hard and overwhelming times, in hindsight, I can appreciate as I know that they allowed me to gain a better understanding of myself.

Going on exchange is an amazing experience in so many different ways. It is something that I think every student teacher who is willing should have the opportunity to do because the benefits are so great. The experience will change your life and it will be something that you will never forget.