

March 5, 2019

Dear Class of '55:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for making it possible for me to study education in Belize this past block. I learned about the island culture of San Pedro, Belize as well as their education system. As a pre-service teacher, my time in the schools was quite powerful. In San Pedro, tuition must be paid in order to attend any school. What is considered public school is run by different churches, and the private schools have higher tuition, smaller class sizes, and a more structured environment. I found this interesting, as in the U.S. most private schools are run by churches, with only civil religion in public schools.

I spent most of my time at Ambergris Caye Elementary School working with first graders. I was lucky to have the opportunity to work one-on-one with students and teach small and whole group lessons; I have never felt very confident teaching without time to plan a lesson, but I was able to introduce students to the concept of subtraction with regrouping with only a few minutes to prepare. Although it was not perfect, the lesson went well, and it taught me a valuable lesson as a teacher. Later in the week, I worked with my professor to plan a lesson introducing the students to Base 10 blocks, a manipulative that would help them subtract. It is always challenging to introduce manipulatives; however on this trip, I feel I was able to teach more effectively than in the past, and this provided me with my first opportunity to collaborate as a peer educator— an invaluable experience. It was incredible to see the moment students started to understand the concept, knowing that my influence helped to facilitate the learning community.

Teaching in San Pedro was challenging, yet incredibly rewarding. It provided me with the eye-opening opportunity to explore teaching abroad in a safe and comfortable environment.

Although I enjoyed it, I learned that it is important for me to teach in a community where I have my family and friends as a support system. Despite this challenge, I became comfortable teaching without the support of my family— knowing that I no longer need it. I miss the students and teacher I worked with in San Pedro, but I am now more excited than ever to begin my student teaching experience.

Thank you again for this opportunity!

Taylor Wussow '20

