**Global Cohort Study Abroad Scholarship Personal Statement**

Two years ago, I began my quest to become a global educator in Valencia, Spain, with a nine week study abroad program through Michigan State. At the time, of course, I did not know that this experience was my first step toward my goal to be a globally competent teacher. I thought that this trip to Valencia would help me to finish my Spanish minor and become more proficient in Spanish. I simply felt that without that particular experience, my Spanish minor would be inauthentic on any resume. I clearly had no idea how powerful the experience would be as a future educator.

While in Spain, I gained all of the tools necessary to score an orally proficient score on MSU's Spanish Proficiency Exam, but more importantly, I was a student of three of the most compassionate and caring professors I have ever encountered. They encouraged embracing culture and spending time with family, even if it meant missing a class session or two. They denounced exams, promoted impromptu field trips, and pushed us to be actively participating in our classroom learning. When I began that journey, I wanted to become more proficient in Spanish, but by the close of the program, I was only left with more questions. I had spent sixteen years in a United States educational system, so a different educational system was certainly a poignant culture shock for a future educator. I had to know more!

Because of this life-changing experience in Spain with these professors, I now find myself gearing up to attend Cross-Cultural Teaching Abroad in South Africa, where I will analyze and compare the different educational practices, as well as gain field experience in a South African classroom. I am currently student teaching in the Detroit area, and beginning to truly understand just how varied student skill sets and needs can be, and how involved and knowledgeable a teacher must be in order to differentiate her instruction in order to most efficiently and effectively reach each of her students. The students that I have in class push me to constantly ask questions, collaborate, and brainstorm ways to engage and interest them in their learning. This exciting educational puzzle, and perhaps all of their hugs, is what makes me wake up each day with a smile, ready to think on my feet, try new things, and encourage my students. In our ever-shrinking world, we have access to the ideas and cultures of other countries, and it is our duty to our students to make our classrooms more than "diverse," but globally tolerant, globally aware, and a space where students and teachers utilize, apply, and implement the best and most effective resources and educational practices from around the world.

Their reading levels are as varied as their personalities and interests, and while I enjoy testing out new strategies and considering ways to differentiate my instruction to be an efficient literacy teacher, I also recognize that I do not have all of the answers, and that the educational system in which I was raised may not, either. I believe that my educational journey in South Africa is only a second step in becoming a globally competent and committed teacher, and giving me the tools to teach my students to much more than subject matter.

I know that my expectations and goals will soar beyond what I imagine today, and I am blessed and eager to have this opportunity, both for me, and for my future students.