Stephanie Flood
Argentina

Life After Study Abroad
Upon returning from my semester in Buenos Aires, Argentina, I immediately started the elementary education undergraduate program sequence through the School of Education. I graduated in May 2011 with degrees in Elementary Education and Spanish. I have since been teaching Kindergarten in a Madison public school. While teaching, I simultaneously went back to graduate school at the UW part time to study English as a Second Language/Bilingual Education. I graduated with a master’s degree in Curriculum and Instruction in summer of 2014. In my free time, I continue to nourish my urge to travel by visiting friends across the globe.

Impact on Life, Goals & Career
My study abroad experience, which has significantly impacted my life, has prepared me in ways that I did not imagine at the time. For example, my goal to become a fluent Spanish speaker has had very concrete implications in my career. I teach in the dual language immersion program, which means I instruct my students in both Spanish and English. As a Kindergarten teacher, I conduct 90% of daily instruction in Spanish. My classroom composition consists of 50% native English speakers and 50% native Spanish speakers. The goal of the program is bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism for all students. My bilingualism allows me to effectively teach content to my students in both languages, and my bicultural experiences align with the goals of the program. Additionally, my study abroad experience has allowed me to empathize with my students and their families. In Argentina, I had to immerse myself in the existing cultural norms to navigate an unfamiliar schooling atmosphere. Many of my students and their families are new to the American schooling system, and with the perspective I gained abroad, I aim to validate their own cultural experiences while making school in Madison comprehensible.

Advice for Returning Students
The initial return home can be a challenging period. Find ways to honor your time abroad. For me, that means drinking mate on occasion, keeping in close contact with the friends I made abroad, and sampling as many Malbec wine varieties from the Mendoza wine country I once explored. In a broader sense, keep learning and keep exploring. Apply what you have learned to new experiences and interactions with others in all adventures, big and small.

My most special memories are not just specific experiences - they were moments that seemed simple at the time. Looking back, it is these simple moments that I miss the most.

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