STATEMENT OF GRANT PURPOSE

Spain, English Teaching Assistantship

“Señorita! Queremos jugar con usted! (Miss! We want to play with you!)” I heard those words every time I walked into a bilingual pre-kindergarten classroom at Duckrey Elementary School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was surrounded by many children who were from Spanish-speaking families and barely knew English. The knowledge I had of their language and culture allowed me to connect with them and establish the foundations for their English language learning that would be vital to their future education. Moreover, the experiences I have working with these children, as well as students in other Philadelphia schools with large Spanish-speaking populations, have affirmed my yearning to be a bilingual urban educator, specifically with students in special education. For all of these reasons, I am applying to be an English Teaching Assistant in Spain.

Spain is the best option for me for the English Teaching Assistantship because it offers grantees the opportunity to teach in elementary and secondary schools, which is where my specialty and training lies as a double major in Elementary and Special Education and a Spanish certificate candidate. I have always wanted to go to Spain, specifically to study abroad and immerse myself in Spanish culture; however, that was not possible because of the academic requirements for my majors.

I am qualified for a position as an ETA not only because of my training, but because of the comprehensive experience I have working with students in multicultural settings, who function at various developmental levels, with varying ranges of disability. My experience stretches across mainstream, special education, and inclusive classrooms. I value and appreciate the diversity they bring to the classroom, especially since my experience growing up in a small suburb that was fairly homogenous was so different. Furthermore, due to the diversity of learners with whom I interact, I am able to effectively differentiate instruction, provide individual student accommodations, and modify lessons on the spot if unexpected circumstances arise. I often use teaching methods such as modeling, think-pair-shares, journaling, and performing, and incorporate musical and kinesthetic activities into lessons to cater to the learning preferences of all students in the classroom.

While I am teaching and living in Spain, I plan to study special education practices in my community and compare them to my experiences in America. Because many educational programs in Spain fully include students with special needs in mainstream classrooms, I would form collaborative after school programs for students to engage in extracurricular activities such as sports and art together. The activities will focus on aspects of culture that are similar in both Spain and America (i.e. soccer) and students of all abilities will work together to build tolerance and cooperation as well as bridge gaps in cross-cultural awareness. All students, despite disability, will benefit from working together as it teaches students without disabilities empathy and aids in nurturing self-determination for students with disabilities, which is fundamental for their development.

Receiving a Fulbright would not only benefit me upon returning to the US, but also my students as I would bring a knowledge of Spanish culture and international experience that would broaden their classroom horizons and worldly views. Moreover, it will assist me in teaching all students in a way that allows them to learn and reach their fullest potential. Being an ETA would allow me to further open my eyes to the world and in turn, open the eyes of future generations of people to the world and all it offers. I welcome and look forward to that opportunity.