

Personal Statement and Proposal

My dream is to make a difference in the life of a child, whether it be teaching in an inner city school that has a poor special education system or in another country that lacks one entirely. One of my personal goals in life is to teach a student to do something that no one thought they would be able to learn. For this project, I wish to teach special education in Singapore. I would live with my aunt, who is also a special education teacher at a private school and has two special needs children. Teaching in Singapore is something that I have always wanted to do, ever since I started working with special needs children six years ago. Unfortunately, my family does not have the means to send me overseas even if I were to live with my aunt. I am a special education major at BGSU and have over six years of experience working with children who have multiple disorders ranging from dyslexia to autism. I started working in the special education class my freshman year of high school and immediately felt drawn to the students, helping out in the class whenever I had free time or a study hall. I also joined Project Support, which is a club that focuses on getting special needs students involved in the community, and was elected president my senior year. I conducted my senior project serving as a student teacher and it was during this project that I fell in love with teaching. I still go back to my high school to help out whenever I can, and this will be my sixth year working with the class. I have also worked in two other locations: Woodlane, a private school exclusively for the severely disabled, and in the resource room at Crim Elementary. Working with kids is my passion and I have future plans to teach in inner cities and in the Peace Corps.

When my aunt visits me, she and I often talk about how the education system in Singapore is one of the best in the world, but only if a student does not suffer from any disability. Singapore has schools that serve children with special needs, but they are all separate facilities, and there is little to no support in the normal public schools. Both of my cousins have had multiple problems receiving accommodations in the public school system. For example, at the end of every school year the students take an assessment test that shows the school how each student is doing and determines if they move on to the next grade. My cousin with dyslexia scores at the top of his class on the verbal portion of the assessment but fails the reading and writing section every year. My aunt has talked with the administrators and tried to get someone to read the tests to him, but the government will not allow it. My other cousin, who has Asperger's, has met similar hardships and is now attending a private school specifically for children with special needs. Also, in the Singapore school system, the children take a test at the end of their sixth year that determines what they are going to do for the rest of their life. If they score well, they will finish school in four years and go to university. If they score average, they will finish school in five years and go to university as well. If they score poorly, they will attend a technical school and learn trades or do manual labor. There are many problems with this sort of test, one being that children can change. At sixth grade, a child may not be doing the best academically, but if they receive help they may excel. I know this from personal experience as I was one of those children. In the sixth grade, I suffered from ADHD and received a lot of help from the school system, and because of that I became a high school honors student, and I am currently maintaining a 3.8 college GPA. I know that even if I do go to Singapore, I am not going to single-handedly change the school system but I know I can help.

The lack of a successful special education program in Singapore inspired me to compare the special education systems of different countries as my Honors Project, which is the final project that honors students need to complete to be able to graduate with Honors. Living in Singapore would greatly enhance my research and allow me hands on experience that I could include in my project. I plan to live in Singapore from August to September, which is the second half of their school year, and stay with my aunt and accompany her to work. I have talked to my aunt and she has contacts that would also allow me to work in both kinds of public schools: the main schools as well as the facilities for special needs children. This would allow me to conduct research there for comparison. I plan on working in each setting for at least two weeks observing how the systems differ in accommodating the needs of special education children. During my stay, I wish to immerse myself in the culture to study how their views effect the government's participation in the special education system. This experience will not only allow me the means to conduct hands-on research for my honors project, but it will also give me the ability to understand and work with other cultures, something that is vital in the educational field. This experience will allow me to expand my knowledge not only of other cultures but also of other teaching methods that will not be available to me otherwise and give me something extra to bring into my classroom to help stimulate growth in my students as well as myself.

Budget

Transportation: \$600 (includes bus pass, taxi fares, and train fares)

Daily things: \$600 (restaurants, daily things like a tooth brush or other things that I may need)

Plane ticket: \$2,000 (round trip)

Total: \$3,200