

Director's Note Global Ambassadors

Happy new year, and welcome to the 2018 spring issue of *Field Notes*. As has become our custom for several years now, we are taking the occasion of the new year to highlight our overseas student teaching program. The program is designed to “plant seeds” to help participants expand their view of the world and adopt practices to promote intercultural understanding in classrooms where they teach.

As you will see in the stories that follow, the seed-planting has enjoyed considerable success! For the candidates who share their stories here, the program was personally and professionally transformational. So please take time from your busy schedule to read the reports of these global ambassadors.

The first stop in your vicarious journey will be in the Southern Hemisphere as Elementary Education major Courtney Eaton provides a glimpse of her experience in South Africa, adapting to different customs and teaching styles, and coaching her first-grade students in cricket.

Then you will travel far north to Sweden as English Education major Cara Ledford explains how teaching in a Swedish high school convinced her to pursue a teaching position in Europe. Cara's and Courtney's accounts of their journeys are buttressed with photos of our efforts to prepare globally-minded teachers, including those contributed by Eryn McNamara, who was placed in Spain.

I hope the articles will inspire you to think about ways you help the students in your charge appreciate cultural variation. I also hope you will share with us some of the strategies you use to build understanding among the various cultural groups in your classroom. We will happily highlight your ideas in future issues of our newsletter!

Here's to a new year that brings opportunities for us all to learn from one another and appreciate the diversity that is in our midst, with warm wishes for a productive and successful year!

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Her Name is KFC

Courtney Eaton, Elementary Education
Port Elizabeth, South Africa

In every family there is a child who vows to be different: who won't settle for what has been done in generations past, but who wants to step out and risk doing something new; who keeps her parents on her toes with her unpredictability; who takes every opportunity for spontaneity. I am one of those kids. From birth I have been the child who seeks challenge and adventure. If someone tells me the odds are stacked against me, it only encourages me to go for it more; and that is exactly how I ended up student teaching in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

Since neither of my parents ever attended college, I had a lower chance of becoming a college student myself. I overcame those odds. As a first-generation college student, I had a very small chance of finding a way to pay for a full four-year degree. I overcame those odds. Coming from a family of generations who never left the same city, I had a minute chance of ever leaving the country. I was determined to overcome those odds, too.

When I declared my Elementary Education major as a freshman, I decided I would student teach abroad. I knew that a semester overseas would provide opportunities for new experiences and insight, along with challenges and growth—and I wasn't wrong. My time in South Africa was one of the most rewarding, memorable, and growth-inducing seasons of my life.

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Elementary Education student teacher Courtney Eaton coached her first grade students in cricket at Laerskool Summerwood Primary in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

"Her Name is KFC" cont'd

I'll never forget the day I stepped off the airplane, after almost 48 hours of traveling(!), and set my feet on African soil. The images of the South African people, foods, and landscape from that first day will be ingrained in my memory forever. I don't know what my expectations were, or if I really even had any, but I did know that I would spend every day of the next several months actively learning, adapting, and molding.

Those first few days in my new city were sweet. My host family greeted me at the airport and led a mini tour of all their favorite places in their hometown. I unpacked and settled into my new home. I eased into the South African way of life by getting to know my 12- and 13-year old host siblings, trying new foods, and exploring the neighborhood. The real challenge didn't arise until I started student teaching.

On my first day at Summerwood Primary School, the principal greeted me with the South African treat Koeksisters and introduced me to all the staff. I was given a crash course in the "African style of teaching" along with basic manners and guidelines. Then I went on a guided tour through the massive complex of elementary school buildings, and I was even asked to help set up my classroom and prepare for the students' first day of school.

The following couple of weeks quickly grew more challenging. Everyday tasks that never required thought at home were intense problem-solving tasks in South Africa. I had to strategize the best techniques and travel routes on my bike to counter the INTENSE South African wind, the easiest way to shower (and even use the bathroom!) without much water access in the face of a major drought, and the best means of communicating due to knowing only English--one of thirteen official South African languages. The way things worked was so different for everything from cell phones to driving, and even eating! Once I actually burned off a chunk of my hair with the curling iron because the voltage running through their circuits was different. My world was turned upside down.

The last thing I wanted to deal with while adjusting to the culture was to stand out, but of course, that was unavoidable. With the wide influence on South Africa of Hollywood and American news reporting, my accent was a dead giveaway to my identity. Sometimes I wouldn't even have to speak; something about me just screamed, "AMERICAN!" In some instances I almost felt like a mini-celebrity with people asking to hear me speak or dying to

know about my norms at home or "life as an American". Other times I felt like a potential target. Depending on where I was, and who I was around, being American would immediately mark me as a bullseye. It was these moments I was so thankful for the friends and family who had "adopted" me as one of their own.

The people I grew to know in my work place, in my home, and in my community influenced every aspect of my experience in South Africa. The memories I made with these people will be held in the depths of my heart for the rest of my life. They were patient with me as I learned right from wrong, they introduced me to all their favorite sweet treats, and they explained rugby to me—even allowing me to argue that football is better.



During her time in South Africa Courtney made lifelong friends, shown here attending a rugby match together.

They fixed my flat bike tire when I didn't even know I had one, and they introduced me to an app that helped me win my daily battle against the wind. They even helped me fix my hair so nobody could see the burned spot! When anyone would refer to me as "the American," they would quickly respond back, "Hey, her name is KFC," with KFC being the only thing anyone knew about Kentucky. I now consider my roommate Dana to be one of my best friends. Six months after returning to the U.S., I still look forward to our weekly exchange of life updates and uplifting messages, along with the occasional ridiculous photo from our time together in Port Elizabeth.

Another group of people who impacted me in South Africa was my students. The first classroom I taught was a group of sweet first graders. My experience teaching them was quite unique because it was their first two months ever spent in a school. In South Africa, students start school in "Grade 1" at six years old, at the beginning of the calendar year. So when I arrived in January, the school year was just about to begin. This experience prepared me not only for my own "first day of school" that I would eventually have in my own classroom, but also for what to expect from my future students on their first day.

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“Her Name is KFC” cont’d

I witnessed my students growing academically, socially, and emotionally over those first few months, and it was truly an honor to be a part of it. I taught units and implemented my own lessons. I created classroom guidelines and constructed behavior plans. I chaperoned field trips and attended parent-teacher conferences. I gained insight from my cooperating teacher, and she even borrowed some ideas from me. I also learned from diverse perspectives and participated in many discussions about cultural differences. I truly felt like I experienced all aspects of being a teacher.

Thankfully my student teaching life wasn’t always so serious. It also involved numerous fun and goofy memories both during and after school hours. One of my favorite experiences was coaching first graders in cricket, a sport I barely knew existed. When I found out I was going to coach, I went to several professional South African cricket matches, and received a few mini lessons in cricket from my host dad, in order to try to learn the sport.

In addition to coaching cricket, I also participated in many field trips with my students. One of those trips involved taking all the students to the beach down the road to practice handwriting in the sand. My students became honorary Wildcat fans when I taught them the requisite “C-A-T-S!” cheer, and I endured countless taste tests of Biltong. No matter how many flavors I tried, they never could convince me to say that I liked it. I will cherish all of these memories forever.



Walking to the beach to practice handwriting in the sand.

Life outside of the classroom was an experience of its own. Braving the world’s tallest bridge bungee jump, shark diving, and petting a cheetah gave me that adrenaline rush I always heard about on TV. Traveling through mystic mountain towns, beach cities, and Capetown backpacker lodges satisfied my lust for travel. Riding an elephant and driving through countless game reserves and safari parks allowed me to see more wildlife than I had ever dreamed. On top of that, I spent some unique time in township churches and preschools, worshiping and watching people of all ages in the most beautiful spiritual encounters I have ever witnessed.



Student teaching in a foreign country inevitably came with some difficulties. One challenge I faced was teaching phonics to my first grade class, because we speak different dialects of English. South Africa uses more British pronunciations. This was a huge challenge for me when teaching students how to pronounce and write letters for the first time. Every aspect of teaching phonics was different: the way we write our letters, the way we spell certain words, and most noticeably, the way we say each sound (due to our different accents). This was challenging not only for me but also for my first graders. But what is growing without being challenged?

My time in South Africa not only stretched me, it matured me and empowered me as a teacher. Sometimes being in unfamiliar or uncomfortable circumstances is the essential ingredient to the recipe for growth. Seeing how much I learned in one of the most foreign environments of my life taught me that, as a teacher, it is sometimes necessary to place your students in new situations in order to see them take off on their own.

Would I do it again? One thousand times “Yes!” I believe that this experience not only prepared me to be a strong teacher, it equipped me to live in a world of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and cultures. My semester abroad gifted me with friendships to last a lifetime and people to love forever. It allowed me to step outside my comfort zone and say “yes” to opportunities I might not have otherwise taken. It also gave me endless stories and memories to share for years to come. I would choose to go by “KFC” all over again if it meant having an experience that compared to my time in South Africa.

Navigating Europe with Teaching as My Compass

Cara Ledman, Secondary English Education
Linköping, Sweden

One summer evening before my senior year of college at the University of Kentucky, my parents and I went out to dinner. I was applying to UK's Secondary English Master's degree program, and while we talked over our pizza, my dad asked what I planned to do after I finished school. I shrugged, but he looked at me dubiously and called my bluff. For a long time I had felt a longing to do something different, but I replied that I wasn't sure of the details yet... and then I confessed my urge to go far away to see the world, to help people, and to learn from various cultures. My parents raised their eyebrows and dove into a series of questions that only parents can come up with, ranging from sensible to ridiculous. Since I didn't have a concrete plan, I didn't have many answers for them; we would see what unfolded.

The semester before my graduate program started, I talked with one of my mentor teachers about my urge to do something uncommon; to go somewhere and try to make an impact. He suggested I complete my student teaching semester overseas. Because I played soccer for UK, I had never been able to schedule a semester abroad and had no clue it was a possibility during graduate school. I jumped on the idea and explored all of my options. While I was incredibly drawn to warm places like South Africa or Spain, my coordinator highly recommended I consider UK's exchange program with Sweden. My gut told me to go for it. I wanted to be in Europe where I could easily travel to so many places I've dreamed about visiting, so I agreed, and we started planning.

As sad as I was to think of leaving behind my family, friends, and dog for several months, I was thrilled to embark on this once-in-a-lifetime journey. I was excited to travel with three other UK students who were going to the same town, so we could all travel together and support each other. In the next few months, I researched everything I could about Sweden. I had to write a 20+ page report about it for one of my classes. However, even with all of this research, I really had no idea what I was in for. Research couldn't prepare me for dragging two 50-pound suitcases a mile in the snow to get to my dorm while laughing with the three other UK student teachers. It couldn't prepare us for a helpful Swedish guy pulling up, offering to help us with a ride or directions. Nothing could have prepared me for my experience student teaching abroad in Linköping, Sweden.

The first few days in Sweden were dark, cold, and disorienting. We were still learning our way around, and we had no Wi-Fi in our rooms, so we had to resort to the old-fashioned "Meet here at this time" protocol. Despite the dark and cold, we were all eager to meet new people and begin our placements in our schools.

continued inside

Photos from the Field

Eryn McNamara, Elementary Education
Valencia, Spain



Eryn McNamara taught 3rd and 5th grade children during her student teaching semester abroad at the American School of Valencia (ASV) in Spain.



Dr. Sharon Brennan (middle) was joined by students and colleagues at the Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS) conference in Valencia, Spain.

Also pictured (L-R): ASV Preschool and Elementary Principal Dr. Ann C. Kox, UK student teachers Miranda Fulce, Emily King, and Eryn McNamara, ASV Director Michael L. Smith, and Dr. Thomas Guskey.

“Navigating Europe...” cont’d

First we began our intensive Swedish course where we met people from all around the world including Canada, Belgium, South Africa, Germany, Sweden, Amsterdam, Chicago, and more. Joining an Erasmus group is like nothing else: I met young people from all over the world who were just as eager to make friends as I was—people who want to explore the world and open themselves up to meeting new friends and having new experiences. The other UK students and I hung out with people in this group throughout our entire time in Sweden, and we continue to stay in touch with them. They have grown into friends from whom I have learned immensely and whose company I have enjoyed greatly.

I soon began my placement in Linköping’s Katedralskolan, one of the oldest schools in Sweden. It is a huge, Hogwarts-like building which was initially daunting. I would be lying if I said I wasn’t intimidated and nervous when I walked up to it on my first day. Despite my apprehension, inside I met some of the warmest people I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. All of the teachers were so welcoming and wonderful from the very start. I worked with three mentor teachers, which I liked, because I learned various things from each of them. They each had their own teaching style and approach, and I adapted and incorporated a little from each of them into my own practices. I began teaching full 90-minute lessons within a week or two of being there, which made me very nervous at first. While I felt a little overwhelmed at times, I am so thankful now to my teachers for giving me a lot of responsibility, because it helped tremendously in preparing me to someday lead my own classroom.

Throughout the semester, I traveled to some of the most beautiful places I’ve ever seen, like Prague, Amsterdam, rural Sweden, Switzerland, and more. I loved seeing parts of the world that I had never visited before and learning about cultures that I had only read about. I created friendships that will last a lifetime, and I met my boyfriend while there as well. I pushed myself to do things, try things, and go places I never would have before. Traveling and putting myself in this situation forced me to step outside my comfort zone many times over.

During my time at Katedralskolan, I fell in love with teaching people from around the world. I loved having students from Somalia, Poland, Turkey, Sweden, Germany, the U.S., and more, all sitting together in a classroom working together on a common goal or idea. It was a really beautiful thing for me to see. This wonderful experience led me to pursue a teaching position abroad after my Master’s program concluded.

As my semester ended, I applied for postings both around Europe and in the United States. After many emails, conversations, interviews, and anxious nights, I spoke with an international school in the Bodensee lake region of southern Germany, and it turned into a real opportunity. My parents lived in Germany for three years, starting

the day after they got married, because my dad served there in the military, and throughout my life I have heard magical stories of their time spent there and getting lost around Europe. These warm memories, along with many other reasons, led me to accept the job.

As I write this piece, I am sitting in my apartment in Konstanz, Germany, about to go to bed so that I can wake up for my daily commute. I take a boat to school every day because it’s across the lake. Many mornings, I look out over the water at the mountains and at the sun rising, and I think about how unpredictable life is and how thankful I am to be here today. As I began my student teaching semester, I never imagined that ten months later I would be riding a boat to work every day, learning German, and teaching students from around the world. This year has been full of experiences that have shaped me into a more empathetic person, a more resourceful and prepared teacher, and a more excited citizen of the world.

I used to roll my eyes at the peppy, pushy people who came into my college classes preaching about study abroad, partially because I didn’t think I would have the opportunity, and partially because it was a world away from me that I couldn’t understand. I am so thankful that I finally had the opportunity to study abroad, because it has pushed my life into a direction I never thought I would be fortunate enough to pursue. I feel like the world has opened up for me, and I am thrilled to continue forward into the role as a full-time teacher while also continuing to explore and learn as much as I possibly can.

Cultural Connection: “Unlearn Fear + Hate”



Bader Alsulami, Ellie Holliday, and Dr. Sharon Brennan attended Transylvania University’s “Unlearn Fear + Hate” event at Masjid Bilal Ibin Rabah, a mosque in Lexington.



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SPOTLIGHT ON COLLABORATION: FRIENDSHIP PARTNERS
Students from the UK College of Education overseas student teaching preparatory course partnered with international students.

Collaborative Connection: Sharing Ideas

We want to feature your ideas about teaching and learning, and stories about collaborative projects taking place between and among university and school-based partners.

- How do you foster student learning and promote quality teaching?
- What challenges have you faced, and what changes did you make to overcome them?
- What collaborative projects have you observed or implemented?

Send stories or ideas to:
mary.henderson@uky.edu

Mark Your Calendar!

January 2 2:00 pm	University Supervisors' meeting in 122 TEB
January 3 2:00 am	ST Orientation in Taylor Ed. Auditorium
January 4	First day for most student teachers
March 5	Dual placement student teachers begin 2nd half placements
March 27 3:30-6:00 pm	Education Career Fair Kroger Field @ UK 1540 University Dr. 118
May 5	Last day of UK's Spring 2018 semester

Tuition Waiver Program for Cooperating and Resource Teachers

State universities provide cooperating teachers a tuition waiver for 3-6 credits depending on duration of student teaching supervision.

Resource teachers can also claim a tuition waiver for up to 6 credits for each KTIP intern supervision they complete.

To redeem your waiver at UK, you must:

- use your credits within one calendar year of completing the assignment,
- gain admission to the university and be a student in good standing,
- complete a tuition waiver form prior to each semester enrolled,
- submit the waiver form to the associate dean's office prior to the first day of classes for each semester of enrollment.
- visit <https://education.uky.edu/ADeanARGS/tuitionwaiver> for contact info and an application to redeem your waiver at UK.

To claim your tuition waiver at other Kentucky universities, visit:
<http://www.epsb.ky.gov/mod/page/view.php?id=142>