

STATE OF GRANT PURPOSE

McKenna Domalski, Bulgaria, English Teaching Assistantship

Being a teacher is something I've always known I wanted to do. I have been so inspired by those around me who have taught me so much throughout my life, and I've always known I wanted to be able to do the same for others. I am in my senior year here at Michigan State University, studying to become an English teacher, and hopefully much more than that. When deciding to apply to become a Fulbright Scholarship recipient, I was beyond excited when I learned of the opportunity to teach in Bulgaria. Being that my minor is History, I am very interested in going to such a historically rich country. I have learned a little about Bulgaria's role in the Ottoman Empire throughout my world history courses, as well as the building and reign of their own Bulgarian Empires. The fairly recent conversion from a socialist government to that of a capitalist government is something that also intrigues me. I would love to experience Bulgaria in depth, for it is a fairly mysterious country to me, and I hope to learn much about this beautiful land and be able to communicate that to others, students and peers, upon my return to America.

While I have no knowledge of the Bulgarian language, unfortunately, I have vast experience in interacting with those whom I do not speak the same language, or those who barely communicate at all. In my travels to South Africa, India, Argentina, and Mexico, I could not speak the language, but quickly found ways to communicate with those around me. Communication is not only done through words, but also through simple expression, both physical and emotional. Language barriers do not only exist between those who do not speak the same language, but also those who are not able to speak at all, such as the sufferers of Muscular Dystrophy with whom I volunteer. Unfortunately, this disease can take away one's ability to use their facial muscles, thus prohibiting from them from being able to speak. Through working with these incredible people, I have become more perceptive to their needs and wants through simple gestures, as well as building my own intuition. These experiences make me confident in my ability to succeed in teaching overseas.

I have worked extensively with students in English classrooms in America, both on an individual level, as well as instructing an entire class. Last year I tutored three young women, reigning from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, and Burma, who had no prior knowledge of the English language. It was extraordinary to see their drive and improvement over the course of the four months I worked with them. I taught them to read and write, as well as to communicate orally with others. Michigan State has fully prepared me to work with students from all backgrounds, including those who are of different cultures than myself. While teaching in Bulgaria, I expect to benefit greatly from the students and peers I interact with, for that is experience that I could not receive while teaching in America. The different culture, as well as the learning and teaching styles I will encounter will thoroughly enhance my ability to become a great teacher, and personally help me to relate to my students, no matter their ethnicity, social class, background, etc. If given the opportunity to live and teach in this country, I would love to engage in the culture in depth. My free time would be spent attempting to learn the language, in order to show respect to my hospitable host country, as well as explore the country itself, and interact with the community and learn from those who are different from myself. I believe that Bulgaria has much to offer to me, as an individual, as well as an English teacher, and I hope to offer just as much to my host country; a mutual relationship in which both of us can prosper and grow.