



Kendall Szafnicki

Undergraduate Student, Elementary Education & Reading
Cabarete, Dominican Republic - January 2015

SET YOURSELF APART

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

OBSERVE

On our first day I sat on the porch outside the classroom and observed the children through an open window. I was only a foot away from the nearest child and he just kept on with his work. After the briefest moment of transition the children didn't seem to notice any of us were in their space. I watched two children set up the tables for lunch and was so impressed with how well they *independently* engaged the process and also enjoyed the act of setting every item in it's place...one-by-one. I learned so much about Montessori just by noticing things like this.

TEACH

Although I don't want to teach in a Montessori school, I feel there is much that I can bring to my own future classroom. For instance, instead of saying things like, "good job," it is more effective to tell students exactly what I am noticing about their work, acknowledge how they feel about their success, and encourage them to continue.

GROW

I work at a camp with several children who came to the US from the Dominican Republic. It was wonderful to return from this program and be able to share my experience with them, and to listen to their own stories. The trip really helped me connect with my campers and their families.

ADVICE

There are so many places you can go. Research beforehand; decide what you want to learn; see what catches your eye. Read past participants' blogs to get a sense of what you will be in for!



Kendall at the Monkey Jungle animal sanctuary

[Click to Read Kendall's Blog](#)

"I learned to be more patient. The kids in the school were so patient with themselves and I realized that I needed to be that way, too. I shouldn't just jump in with the answer, but should allow more time for students to get 'there' on their own."

Favorite Aspects of the Program

- Working to break the language barrier with my host mom.
- Cooking Dominican dishes, especially plantains!
- Snorkeling and exploring the coral reefs.
- Learning the history of the DR, and it's relationship with Haiti.
- Being with the children at the Montessori school and finding out how they learn and participate in this setting.
- Discovering new things: zip-lining, foods, words, and music!