

**Rachel Schlesinger**  
**Alcalá de Henares, Spain Summer 2022 Study Abroad Program**

This summer I had the opportunity to go on a study abroad trip to Alcalá de Henares, Spain which is about a 40-minute train ride from Madrid. While abroad for a month, I spent my mornings in a Spanish charter primary school observing, learning, and teaching. From the second I stepped foot in the school, I had already gained a whole new perspective.

In Spain, the teachers switch classes, meaning they are not with the same students all day every day. I was placed with a teacher whose main class was 3rd grade; but we also were in 1st, 4th, and 6th. While at this school, I taught math to the 3rd grade class for 4 days in Spanish. This was a new experience for me entirely. First of all, I was teaching in Spanish which was a challenge. Next, I did not have access to a lot of technology. Yet, when I taught these students geometry, they understood and did well on a formative assessment I created. Having the opportunities and learning experiences I have had at Illinois State and in the United States, I was able to use some of the tricks and tactics I had learned while abroad. For example, I used multiple classroom management strategies, adapting them in a way that students who speak a different first language than me would understand. This was very beneficial for me in my practice, as I was able to use bilingual strategies and methods from my English as a Second Language endorsement classes.

Other than observing in the schools, I took classes abroad, was able to travel to different cities and countries, and learned lots about the history of Spain. The places I traveled to were Madrid, Segovia, Toledo, Barcelona, and Paris. Each of these had so many beautiful castles, buildings, and churches; and the architecture had its own style at each place.

If I had to choose my three favorite parts of my study abroad trip, they would be:

1. Getting to explore the different cities and learn about Spanish history
2. Interacting and forming connections with Spaniards
3. Experiencing a new culture

Each of these has given me a new perspective, and I know that it has already influenced my teaching philosophy. I am grateful that I had this opportunity to enrich my learning and become better prepared for my future career.