

**LEARNING OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE
FOR THE PROFESSIONAL OF TOURISTIC AND HOTEL MANAGEMENT.
CASE LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN THE CITY OF TONAWANDA, IN STATE NEW
YORK, USA.**

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UNIVERSIDAD PEDAGÓGICA Y TECNOLÓGICA DE COLOMBIA

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ESCUELA ADMINISTRACIÓN TURÍSTICA Y HOTELERA

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Dedication

Completing one of the most important stages of my life and developing this report, I realized that this was achieved thanks to many people who have always been with me in the good and bad times; I want to dedicate with pride all my efforts and this work to them.

I dedicate it mainly to God, who gave me wisdom to reach this goal, strength in every problem and the opportunity to fulfill one of my dreams. To my mother, Ligia Elena Bueno; my father, Henry Buitrago Alba; my brother, Simon Leonardo Buitrago; my aunt Hilda Patricia Bueno; and my grandmother, Hilda Cadena Bueno. They were my motivation, they trusted me, and they supported me unconditionally along this way.

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1. Introduction

Currently, in Colombia, business trends have evolved with clear and standardized requirements. Consequently, trained professionals need to be developed in this competitive and developed country. This requires certain skills such as the learning and mastery of a second language, which can be achieved through a cultural exchange. Through a cultural exchange, people can live in another country, develop relationships with others, and learn about other cultures. In the future, this experience can increase the possibilities of job opportunities, like closing deals with senior executives.

In a globalized world, professional skills include and depend on the ability to communicate with others effectively to provide the best customer satisfaction. Therefore, acquiring communicative proficiency in another language will result in a competitive advantage for people. Not only is verbal communication important but cultural understanding is also important. With these abilities, a business professional will be able to interact and understand a tourist's native language in order to understand and satisfy the tourist's wishes.

The present project emphasizes the realization of a cultural exchange in the United States through an internship abroad. As a result, this practical experience will be of great benefit to the author's future. By carrying out educational activities as a complement to the university studies already obtained in the country of origin, this internship allows one to have a personal experience of getting involved with another culture. Not only will one learn another language

but she also will understand the new culture first hand. This exchange will provide communication and interaction with the local community, cultural trips, and the educational opportunities when taking classes at an American university or college (Ochoa, 2010, p21). By living outside of Colombia, an exchange student will be immersed into a language and lifestyle, creating the need to communicate and coexist with the new culture.

Acquiring the English language requires skills in all the major areas of language: reading, speaking, listening, and writing. These skills are necessary for the world of work where oral and written skills are very important. A cultural exchange motivates a person to study and learn the language in order to better understand the characteristics of an English-speaking country, such as the United States. This applies to the workplace by enriching a person's thinking in international contexts. This understanding will help one adopt an open mentality in the global environment.

For example, for future tourist and hotel management students, the English language is fundamental in any area. For instance, it is important for tourist information and management and promotion of tourist destinations or activities. This can be done through intermediary companies, accommodations, and transportation (Becerra, 2011, p40). These students need to be prepared to establish communication with tourists and professionals. Therefore, learning a foreign language abroad is necessary and very beneficial for hotel and management students because they will have connections with other people and will be able to communicate with them effectively.

1.1 Objectives

1.1.1 General Objective.

To acquire the English language as a competitive advantage on a professional level through a cultural exchange and direct interaction in an English-speaking country.

1.1.2 Specific Objectives.

- To get involved in a cultural exchange program that facilitates access into an English-speaking country in order to acquire a new language.
- To be immersed in the American culture to achieve competitive advantages.
- To establish strategies to achieve a proficient level of reading comprehension and speaking skills.
- To be able to interact directly with the local people in order to establish an effective relationship in order to understand their customs and values.

2. Chapter 1: Getting Involved in a Cultural Exchange Program

2.1 Way to Go to the United States

2.1.1 The Company.

2.1.1.1 EF Education First (abbreviated as EF).

Education First is an international education company that specializes in language courses, educational trips, academic degree programs, and cultural exchanges. The company was founded in 1965 by Bertil Hult and is headquartered in Lucerne, Switzerland. It is the world leader in organizing language courses abroad. EF is also affiliated with an independent exchange program, Cultural Care Au Pair.

(Education First, 2017)

2.1.1.1.1 Cultural Care Au Pair.

The Cultural Care Au Pair program is a cultural exchange in which the au pair experiences the American lifestyle, lives with an American family, and primarily, works and cares for children from birth to adulthood. The program lasts one year and the au pair can be extended for another year. In addition, an au pair can work, study, and travel all over the United States. This program is regulated by the State Department, which offers the only way to travel to the United States as an au pair. Au pairs are young adults who live as part of the family and provide culturally enriching childcare. The families gain peace of mind knowing their children are well-cared for and loved by someone who becomes like an older sister.

(Cultural Care Au Pair, 2017, p1)

2.1.2 Requirements to Apply for the program.

-Have a conversational level of English.

- More than 200 hours of accredited experience caring for children.
- Be 18 to 26 years old.
- Be in good health.
- Be studying and have a high school diploma.
- Have a valid passport.
- Not have any criminal record.
- Have a driver's license.
- Be open minded, positive, and self-sufficient.

(Cultural Care Au Pair, 2017, p2)

2.1.3 It Is Important to Keep in Mind.

2.1.3.1 Preparing Necessary Documentation.

Cultural Care Au Pair is a company recognized by the State Department of the United States as an official sponsor of the J-1 Cultural Exchange Visa. This legal visa allows one to work in the United States and is valid for 12 months with a 30 day grace period. This can be used to travel throughout the United States. Also, it can also be extended by another 6, 9, or 12 months. “Cultural Care Au Pair delivers all the necessary documents and advice throughout the application process for the visa or for its extension. The person who wants to apply for this kind of visa must request two appointments. One is at the American embassy for a personal interview. The other is for photos and fingerprints. After this, the visa will be approved or disapproved” (Becerra, 2011). The consular makes the decision based on the interview and documentation.

(Cultural Care Au Pair, 2017, p5)

Reasons Why the J-1 Visa Can Be Refused.

-If the embassy believes that the person doesn't have the intention to return to their native country, they must provide legal documents proving why it is important for them to return to their country. For example, the person may need to return to finish their degree.

-The embassy compares records of other people from the same country. If many of the prior approved J-1 visas are from the same country of residence of the applicant and these people have travelled to the U.S. but have not returned and have stayed there illegally, there is a great possibility that the visa would be denied.

-If the person has economic or political problems.

-If the competitor girl doesn't have a conversational level of English or doesn't answer the consul's questions correctly.

-The embassy can check if there are family members living in the United States illegally.

After the visa is accepted, it is necessary to prepare the flights. The first flight is for the training in New York City, and the second flight is to where the host family lives.

2.1.3.2 Flight.

“After the visa has been approved, Cultural Care reserves the flight tickets for the foreign student from the capital city of that person’s country to the United States” (Rojas, 2012, p19). The student must check online and arrange another flight if they don’t live in that city because they must travel from their home city to the capital in their country. In addition, they should pack and organize all important documents and personal belongings needed for the time in the United States.

2.2 Benefits of a Cultural Exchange Program

Improving English Proficiency: Working with this project provides an opportunity to participate in an English language immersion program. Because it's the official language of

the host family, English can be practiced daily in many different institutions and situations (Medina, 2012, p14). It is a real life experience because the knowledge acquired in the classroom is implemented, and new expressions, vocabulary, fluency, and communication strategies are practiced every day. This makes it possible to meet people from all over the world and build friendships with them.

Opportunity to Travel: Someone who lives for a year in the United States can work and travel economically and safely. Also, they can have the best adventure of their life. Many foreign students decide to travel together during their time in this Country. This strengthens their friendships and gives them beautiful memories of each place they visit. While living in the host city, they can get to know the area very well. Most aliens are located in urban areas and suburbs, so they have the opportunity to visit and take part in many activities within a few hours from the host family's home (Medina, 2012, p14). In addition, there is time to travel outside the area and visit other cities and states. Through this, they can learn about the historical, natural, and scientific places in the United States.

Cultural Exchange: The program is focused on a cultural exchange. By participating in this program, the student can immerse themselves in the American culture and can experience new things in every day life, such as going to the supermarket or picking up children from school. These events can be full of surprises. As a member of the family, they have many opportunities to learn about American culture and to share in their culture every day. Some examples are: cooking typical dishes, teaching children activities, playing games, and sharing traditions and customs of their country of origin. They can also learn about the new culture and about cultures from different parts of the world when meeting other people who are

experiencing some of the same situations and sharing in a new adventure (Medina, 2012, p14).

Educational Training: This program allows students to study at an American university. The host family provides up to \$500 for classes during the year. The competitor girl can choose where and what she wants to study, like continuing to improve her level of English, learning some other language, or learning a new skill such as photography and painting, or developing interests in art and history. The educational component is very important in the program. Each participant must complete six academic credits or the equivalent of (72-90) hours during the time in the United States by fulfilling the requirements established by the State Department. Credits must be earned by taking classes at a college or university. She can choose any topic of interest as long as it is through an accredited institution in the United States (Medina, 2012, p15).

2.3 The Resolutions of Pedagogical and Technological University of Colombia

The Pedagogical and Technological University of Colombia establishes, through Resolution number 10, of March 4, 2008, the guidelines for progress of national and International exchanges, by which these exchanges are given. The academic exchanges could be:

- Language improvement courses.
- Performing an academic activity in a Spanish-speaking country.
- Performing an academic activity in a country with a language other than Spanish.

The following academic requirements that students of the Pedagogical and Technological University of Colombia must fulfill and be approved by the cultural exchange are:

- a. Be an active student and not have finished an academic degree.
- b. Have a cumulative grade point average equal to or higher than the lowest limit of the highest quintile of the accumulated weighted average of the student in the requested semester.
- c. The student must not have failed any subjects.
- d. Doesn't have any academic sanctions.
- e. Doesn't have any disciplinary sanctions.
- f. Must complete the exchange in the appropriate semester. This will be considered by the International Relations Department and the Faculty Council.
- g. Must have a cooperative agreement signed between the Pedagogical and Technological University of Colombia and the institution during the time of the exchange. Also, the exchange must be registered in the International Relations and Agreements Office.
- h. In the selection process, the applicant must obtain a rating from 70 to 100 points.
- i. Other specific requirements in general or established by the cooperation agreements.

Lopez (As quoted in Medina, 2012, p17).

In addition, Resolution Number 16, of March 17, 2009, regulates the modalities of Degree Work for students of Presential Programs of the Pedagogical and Technological University of Colombia, resolved in article 1 literal B; and specifies that Extension Practices should be developed such as:

-Practices with business or social projection (like business entrepreneurship or internships).

-Clinical internship.

-International Rotaring Medicine.

Described clearly in article 14 of the same resolution:

The above practice will be certified and accepted as long as it is practiced with a social or business projection. It must have been studied for a duration of more than 16 weeks and the report is in agreement with the indicated parameters by the curricular committee.

(Lopez, 2008).

2.4 Induction in the United States

2.4.1 Training School in New York City.

The first step upon arriving in the United States of America is to attend a week of training with highly trained childcare staff at an institute in New York City. At the training, there are young Colombians from different cities and young people from all over the world, such as Australia, China, Brazil, Italy, France, Mexico, and Germany. “Each person comes with different beliefs and customs, but all have three common goals: participate in a cultural exchange, improve English proficiency, and have an unforgettable experience” (Torres, 2012, p18). Training consists of taking classes, enjoying different activities, and learning about the American culture.

Picture 1. Training school classmates



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (Training school. 2016). Training school classmates. New York City, NY.

After the training, the teachers handed out a certificate for the 32 hours of training. On the last day in New York City, the students go on a tour of the city and visit places like the Statue of Liberty, Fifth Avenue, the Empire State Building, Rockefeller Center, and Times Square. After that, they return to the institute where the training take place and they prepare to go to the host family's home.

3. Chapter 2: The Beginning of a New Experience

Learning any language, especially English, is very important; it helps to open doors in different parts of the world and to find more competitive jobs. Therefore, taking into account the field of work and destination this author was interested in, they decided to study English and did an internship in the United States for five months in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The student worked at the Twins baseball stadium and at the Marriott hotel, where knowledge acquired in the university was put into practice. After this experience, in order to improve and to study English, the student talked to a cousin who had participated in a cultural exchange program for two years in Aspen, Colorado. The cousin said it was very enriching because it helps to one to grow as a person by living a different lifestyle and learning from another culture. Therefore, the decision was made to start the process and participate in the cultural exchange. Before undertaking this exchange, the author decided to finish their last semester first. They then started doing the paperwork with the Cultural Care company in February 2016.

A call from Boston, Massachusetts, was received, confirming that everything was fine, so the process of getting an American visa and booking the flight in order to arrive in Buffalo, New York, at the Michaels family home on July 29th, 2016, was begun.

While doing the paperwork for the J-1 American visa, assistance from the Cultural Care Au Pair Company was provided. They secured documents that arrived directly from the United States, such as DS 2019 (a contract between the participant with Cultural Care Au Pair Company as the official sponsor), the contract between the student and the host family), and SEVIS I-901 (a document explaining that the obligatory fee to make the cultural exchange has been paid for the participant). In addition, forms, certificates, and personal documents had to

be collected to show at the American embassy. An interview took place in English in front of the American consul, where questions about the motive for the cultural exchange were asked.

3.1 Learning through exchange

When the immersion person arrives to the United States the situation changes. The First Days, there are many expectations and full of surprises, those are also the hardest days. They are harder than one could even imagine. It is important to adapt to a different lifestyle with new customs, beliefs, and language. It is a great challenge. It is understand of how Americans live and what accents and expressions they use when they speak. It is understand the importance and the difference between learning a second language with natives and learning it at school in Colombia become clear. The first month is the introduction to this new world. The foreign girl has to get used to her responsibilities, the host family, classes, and the culture. One major difference is the food. All these eventually become part of the daily routine. This begin an interesting cultural exchange, which bring numerous experiences, knowledge, and stories.

3.2 Important Activities for Learning English

After starting the routine and working every day, the best way of improving English proficiency is to take academic courses, speak it everyday, listen to music and try to repeat it, and to do sports or other activities. Also, during free time, it is important to spend time with other participants, share celebrations and birthdays with the host family, go to different places, and meet Americans and people from other countries. In this way, English can be practiced. Other free-time activities are watching movies with captions, going to museums, going to parks and shopping.

3.3 North American Celebrations

The North Americans have some similar celebrations to those of the Colombians, but they are celebrated in different ways. Here are some descriptions of how Americans celebrate these special days throughout the year.

Halloween: is celebrated on October 31st. It is very popular in this country, and at the beginning of this month, people decorate their houses with ghosts, witches, cobwebs, and pumpkins. There are different family activities, such as carving pumpkins, escaping a maze created in a cornfield, going to haunted houses, and going on hayrides. This is done on farms far from the town, where adults and children interact and have fun. People celebrate Halloween by having parties in houses or clubs. Many people wear costumes and have competitions to see who has the best costume. The children usually dress up as their favorite character, and parents take them trick or treating through the streets. The children knock on the doors of neighboring houses and ask for sweets. This activity is not only performed by children but also teenagers.

Picture 3. Halloween



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (City of Tonawanda. 2016). Halloween. City of Tonawanda, NY.

Thanksgiving Day: is a national celebration that takes place the fourth Thursday of

November. In Spanish it can be translated as "Dia de Accion de Gracias". On this day, American families get together to share a special feast, where the main dish is turkey accompanied by vegetables, rice, potatoes, cranberry sauce, salads, and the traditional apple pie. It's typical for families to say a thanksgiving prayer before dinner.

Christmas: Before December, families begin to decorate their homes for the Christmas celebration. Most of the time they start before it snows. A few people decorate the outside of the house and the yard with large decorations and lights. Most of them decorate only the inside of the house. The weather determines how many decorations people put outside.

Each family celebrates depending on their religion, since in the United States there are diverse religions, unlike in Colombia, where Catholicism predominates. During this time, people have different traditions, like cutting down a pine tree and taking it home or buying an artificial one. People decorate the tree, prepare and decorate cookies, tour different neighborhoods to see the Christmas lights, and make Christmas crafts such as stockings or angels for the tree. The people don't give as much importance to Jesus, the manger and don't do " El Novenario de Aguinaldos" like in Colombia. Because many children only believe in Santa Claus, and he is the person who takes the gifts to the houses. Some parents buy a small wooden house with 25 drawers. Each box had sweets for each child, and they could only eat one every day until Santa Claus arrived. This helped them to know exactly how many days were left before Christmas. On December 24, the family enjoys lunch, and then Mass. The next day, the gifts appeared under the tree. The whole family unwrapped them in family room, and then shared a special breakfast.

New Year's Day: On December 31, people celebrate New Year's Eve. Many families and friends enjoy dinner together. Children and adults celebrate the beginning of the New Year by

watching the famous Ball Drop held in New York City. On January 1st, a more formal lunch is prepared, and the next day, everything returns to the normal daily activities.

Valentine's Day: is a very popular day in the United States. It takes place on February 14th, and it means "day of love". On this special day, people appreciate and remember their love for family, friends, and significant others. On this day, people give each other cookies, chocolates, cards and flowers. That day the host kids brought candy to their school to share with their classmates. They had to choose a friend to be their Valentine and give them something special.

Picture 4. Valentine's Day



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (City of Tonawanda. 2017). Valentine's Day. City of Tonawanda, NY.

Saint Patrick's Day: is a celebration held on March 17th and is originally from Ireland. In the United States, there are many Irish immigrants, so they celebrate with parades, floats, dancers and musicians. People dress and wear green costumes and decorations, and many adults share an Irish-brand beer or green beer in the streets to enjoy the festivity. Buffalo, the closest city to Tonawanda, is characterized by being one of the cities with the largest number of Irish people in the United States. On this day, the author attended the celebration, and saw how the people celebrated in a traditional and unique way. Evidently, the originating families

of that country paraded with their dogs or in their cars using flags and decorations. The police and firemen paraded in their cars. There were groups of girls dancing, wearing typical costumes, and wearing their hair in ornate and curly styles characteristic of Ireland. Also, groups of adults danced or played instruments. Some people walked in the parade and greeted the crowd. It was a very joyful and green day.

Easter: In April, "Easter Week" is celebrated. Some people call it "Spring Break", or in Spanish "Semana Santa". Most children have vacations that week, and they take advantage of these days by doing some fun activities. They decorate real or fake eggs to put them all around the house. In the American culture, Easter has become more commercialized and based on the "Easter Bunny". It's mainly celebrated on Easter Sunday; the tradition is that rabbits give the children baskets with chocolate eggs. After the parents hide the eggs in different parts of the yard or the house, the children go out to look for them, thinking that they were left by the famous Easter Bunny. Sometimes they open presents, and they have a family dinner with different traditional dishes. It's a very sweet day with different kinds of chocolates, cookies, and desserts.

Picture 5. Easter



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (City of Tonawanda. 2017). Easter. City of Tonawanda, NY.

July 4th: Independence Day is celebrated on July 4th in the United States of America by

native and non-native inhabitants. This day is important and includes many traditions for Americans. It's celebrated in different ways. Many people hang the flag outside their houses. Some have a family barbecue, and they attend concerts or shows. Later at night, they enjoy seeing fireworks close to the rivers and lakes. On this day, the participant watched a concert and participated in a family dinner with a bonfire. There were spectacular fireworks near the Niagara River. It's one of the days that remains in their memory for having been so special.

3.4 The Seasons

The seasons are an important part of a cultural exchange. It's an experience that always intrigues people from other countries because the weather is different. It's important for them keep in mind what clothes can be worn at each season, what activities can be done, and what is done in daily life. With the temperature ranging from 37 C in summer to -28 C in winter, one has to be prepared for every season. The experience in each season is described below:

3.4.1 Summer

Summer is characterized as the best time of the year because it is very warm, and people can enjoy more activities because the days are longer and the nights shorter. For foreign people, it is weird to see the sunset at 9 pm and the sunrise at 5 am. At this time, it's summer vacation for students. Therefore, children have more time for family activities such as going to the beach, swimming, playing, traveling, going to summer camps, playing with other children their own age, doing extreme sports, hiking, horseback riding, and many other things. That's why the tourism and hotel industry grows considerably in the summer months. Also, many people go to amusement parks, restaurants, and clubs, which is related to this industry. This is the time

most awaited by everyone and is the one that feels very short. Nobody wants it to end, and everyone wants to enjoy it to the fullest.

3.4.2 Fall or Autumn.

Starting on September 21, this season is known for the beautiful landscapes because the leaves turn red, orange, yellow, and everything looks magnificent. The days are back to normal with the sunset at 6:00 pm. Little by little, the cold comes, and people have to start wearing more pants and jackets. During the fall, many people visit parks for their wonderful landscapes and do activities like biking and hiking in the good weather. Also, people can see the beautiful fall leaves.

3.4.3 Winter.

Winter is the coldest time of the year and lasts between 4 to 5 months depending on the amount of snow. Some winters are easier than others. It was amazing to see everything magically wrapped in white and to see the houses, trees, and parks look so clean. There are many activities such as building snowmen, making angels, playing with snowballs, tubing, ice skating, skiing and attending ice festivals (where sculptors create great and wonderful figures). The winter that this immersion person experienced was really easy. The Tonawanda community commented that the winter of 2014 was a disaster because the snow reached the middle of the doors and above people's waists. In fact, there were days when they couldn't leave their houses because the snow completely covered the doors. Based on these comments, the winter of 2016 was pleasant. There was nothing extreme, and there were many sunny days with decent temperatures.

Picture 6. Winter



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (kissing Bridge Snow Sports. 2017). Winter. Glenwood, NY.

3.4.4 Spring.

March 21 begins the spring season of rain and flowers. At this time, the temperature and the landscapes change because the snow goes away. The flowers and the tree leaves start to come out. In addition, people begin to plant their gardens and mow their lawns. This makes everything look beautiful in different colors. In the spring, it is important to continue wearing a jacket or coat. Although the weather is not so cold, the temperature can change from one minute to the next. It is always a good idea to carry an umbrella everywhere. Some sports and outdoor activities during this season are cycling, running, and hiking, soccer, and baseball.

3.5 North American Meals

Food is another important aspect of the cultural exchanges that au pairs experience. Foods usually consumed in Colombia can be found in the United States, except for natural juices. The American people buy bottled juices in different flavors like apple, grape, raspberry,

orange, or cranberry, and these juices should be mixed with water due to their high sugar content. A typical American breakfast consists of toast, pancakes or bagels with marmalade, peanut butter, or nutella, a glass of orange juice, a cup of black coffee with cream and/or sugar, or a cup of cereal with milk. On special days, the host parents prepared pancakes with bacon or sausage, or waffles and some fruit. Typical snacks are fruit, cereal, chips, yogurt, water or juice.

Lunch time is between 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm. Unlike Colombians, the people eat light meals like sandwiches, pizza, hot dogs, mac and cheese, pasta, hamburgers, and salads. Dinner is served between 5:30 pm and 6:30 pm. For many Americans, this is the most important meal of the day because it's the time when the whole family gets together. It mainly consists of vegetables, mashed potatoes, pasta or rice, tacos or burritos, meat, pork, chicken, or fish. People usually drink water or milk, and some adults will have wine.

In the southern part of the United States the food is healthier; the people get more fruits, vegetables, and fresh meat; while in the North it is more expensive to eat healthy and food doesn't taste the same, it has many chemicals.

Sometimes the alien wanted Colombian food, but couldn't find the right ingredients in the city of Tonawanda. They could only get some products online. It's important for people to keep a well-balanced diet and work out every day. This will help them to not gain weight and to not get sick.

Picture 7. Cooking for Christmas Dinner



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (City of Tonawanda. 2016). Cooking for Christmas dinner. City of Tonawanda, NY.

4. Chapter 3: Strategies to Achieve a Proficient English Level

4.1 Academic Activities

“The Cultural Care Au Pair program requires the participant to earn at least 6 credits; therefore, the host family must provide \$500 for educational purposes” (Cultural Care Au Pair, 2015). In order to improve their English level, the author took a course in English as a Second Language and a mathematics course in order to improve skills in these areas. Last summer, the online registration for the classes was completed, and studies started in the fall of 2016.

4.1.1 Erie Community College (ECC).

Erie Community College is a public institution in Buffalo, New York. The au pair attended the campus located in downtown Buffalo. The school utilizes a semester-based academic calendar. It offers nearly 100 degree and certificate programs. ECC is part of the 64 campuses in the State University of New York (SUNY) system, which serves Erie County and the surrounding communities of western New York.

(SUNY, 2017)

4.1.1.1 The English as a Second Language Program (ESL).

The ESL program helps prepare students for college admission by offering courses to improve their English skills and college readiness. The program helps students who hold international high school diplomas and also those seeking their high school equivalency diploma required for college admission. Also, it prepares students for the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) exam in all five areas; reading, writing, social studies, science, and mathematics to achieve a New York State High School Equivalency Diploma.

4.1.1.2 The Pre-Collegiate Program.

The pre-collegiate program is designed to enhance the reading and writing skills of ESL students that are required to be successful college courses. It offers developmental courses in mathematics and English. The goal is to develop in students the skills required for accredited courses and the ability to succeed in their chosen career field. ECC offers the following workshops:

Pre-Collegiate Reading / Reading (60 hours of instruction): This course is for adults seeking English language development skills in reading and writing. This course provides students with concepts and general patterns of study to promote future educational experiences.

Pre-Collegiate Developmental Mathematics (60 instructional hours): This course is designed to assist adults and graduates with developmental math to give them the skills necessary to enter a college or master's level class. This course provides adult learners with general study concepts and patterns to promote future educational experiences.

(Erie Community College, 2014)

The first day of classes was exciting. In one course, there were people from different parts of the world, including three Colombians. Each student wanted to learn English as a second language, and in the other course, there were only Americans. In both courses, the communication was only in English. On the first day, there was a test to find out the English level for each person in order to know which areas should be improved.

The classes consisted of different pair or group activities. At the beginning of the class, the teacher explained the specific topics or reviewed some homework. The teacher gave the students worksheets or books to understand the lessons. The students analyzed essays and used dictionaries to search for unknown words. The teacher used audiovisual aids such as videos or used activities from the computer. Sometimes, the homework was left until the end of the class. There were classes in the library where the students used the online library. Some of the topics were developing a thesis, searching for topics of interest, and searching for topics about one's career. In addition to the classroom instruction, the students had to do homework in order to practice the basic concepts in vocabulary, syntactic structures, reading comprehension, grammar, writing, and research.

To get the certification in the course completion of a project was required, where it was necessary to read, analyze a book in English, and give an oral presentation on the last day of classes. The presentation had to be 20 minutes. A summary had to be given, as well as discussion of the importance of reading that book, and one's personal opinion. The author chose the Titanic, and in front of the whole class explained it with slides and illustrations. Also, on this day, there was a test to find out the student's progress during the course to see if it had been productive. After this test, the teacher told the student that they had advanced to a higher level of English, and had obtained a high grade in mathematics. The courses lasted two and a

half months. Studies took place from Monday to Saturday for 3 hours each day. At the end, two certificates for a total of 120 hours were awarded (English as a Second Language writing and reading) and 60 hours (mathematics). The English as a Second Language course provided many opportunities to develop skills, to practice and to understand more about the English language, and instruction on the important rules to remember in writing, reading, listening, and speaking.

4.2 Traveling in the United States of America

To complement the cultural exchange, travel to different cities was undertaken. It was a challenge to travel in an unknown country. However, travel brought about learning, new experiences, and great memories. Each place visited helped with learning the English language. This is because the language must be practiced as a way of communication, and in places like airports, streets, and tourist attractions, English had to be used all the time. Also, every show and celebration is in English. The United States is a multicultural country. There are people from different parts of the world, so the communication is in English and is used at all times.

4.2.1 Places Visited during the Cultural Exchange

Navarre, Ohio, OH: On the first vacation, the family traveled in a camper to Baylor Beach, “which is located in a park in southwest Ohio. It is located near the largest Amish settlement. It's a summer park with several great activities, where the people can swim, paddleboat, play mini-golf, and go camping” (Water Park & Campground, 2017). During this time, the host family and the foreign girl were able to share and get to know each other more.

Thousand Islands, New York, NY: In New York State, there is a group of more than 1,800 islands in the St. Lawrence River, which is located on the border of the U.S. and Canada.

The area is a hub for outdoor activities. Some islands are inhabited and others are not. The main island is named Heart Island. On this island, there is a place called Boldt Castle. The host family and the foreign student went to Wellesley Island on the Saint Lawrence River and camped there for a week. Wellesley Island State Park is the largest camping complex in the Thousand Islands region. Within this rustic paradise, the fishing is excellent, and the beach is amazing. The group went hiking and kayaking. One day, a visit was made to Heart Island, and it was wonderful to see the landscapes, the heart shaped gardens, and the inside of the castle, which looked like the Titanic. Everything was very elegant and romantic!

R. F. (2014).

Picture 8. Bold Castle, Thousand Islands, New York, NY



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (Bold Castle. 2016). Bold Castle, Thousand Islands, New York, NY. Thousand Islands, NY.

Niagara Falls State Park, New York, NY: This park is located in Niagara Falls, New York. The park, recognized as the oldest state park in the United States, is a tourist place where people come from all over the world come to see one of the world's greatest natural wonders. Niagara Falls is America's largest waterfall and is located on the Niagara River,

which is on the border of the United States and Canada. The river drains into Lake Erie into Lake Ontario. The combined falls form the highest flow rate of any waterfall in the world. The Falls is only 17 miles north-northwest of Buffalo, New York, and is 75 miles south-southeast of Toronto, Canada. It is between the twin cities of Niagara Falls, Ontario, and Niagara Falls, New York. A month after the immersion person arrived at their new home, their host family took them to this beautiful park. They had the opportunity to visit this wonder of nature from different points, and appreciated the beauty of the falls.

(Niagara Falls, 2017)

Buffalo, New York, NY: This is the second largest city in the state of New York. The city is located on the shores of Lake Erie and on the border with Niagara County. It was an industrial capital at the beginning of the 20th century. It is characterized by places and art museums such as: the 398-foot Art Deco Town Hall, the Darwin D. Martin House designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, a Greek Renaissance Museum with works by Picasso and Warhol. The alien took academic courses, went to the gym, and spent a lot of time in Buffalo, because this is where all the cultural and natural parks, museums, and attractions are located.

(Visit Buffalo Niagara, 2014).

Grand Island, New York, NY: During the summer the foreigner went to Grand Island and the Niagara River with friends, by boat. Grand Island is a town located in Erie County, New York, United States. Is the largest island in the Niagara River and fourth largest in New York state. The island is located on the Canada and U.S. border. It's northwest of Buffalo.

(Grand Island, NY, 2017)

New York City, New York, NY: This is the most populated city in the United States and one of the most populated in the world. Located at the southern tip of the state of New York, it is known as "A global power city" (New York State, 2017). On December 31st the immersion person wanted to do something traditional from this country, so they decided to travel for the New Year celebration to New York City with friends. The group also attended a football game of the famous New York "Jets" and the following days took a trip on the Hudson River by boat, and other trips walking around, getting to know the city and tourist places such as: Central Park, Chinatown, the Love Sculpture, and the famous Christmas tree located in Rockefeller Center. All the places were decorated for Christmas.

Picture 9. Statue of Liberty, New York City, New York, NY



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (Statue of Liberty. 2017). Statue of Liberty, New York City, New York, NY. New York City, NY.

Ellicottville, New York, NY: This small, rural town in Cattaraugus County is known as one of the top winter destinations in the northeastern part of the United States. It attracts downhill skiers to its two major ski resorts: Holiday Valley and HoliMont. In addition to

skiing, there are more ways to enjoy the snow such as snowmobiling, sleigh rides, horseback riding, and tubing. Every October Ellicottville celebrates Fall Festival with different foods, pumpkin beer, art work, craft shows, carnival rides, and live entertainment. With another friend who lives in this village, the author enjoyed the winter activities and the Fall Festival.

(Team VP, 2015).

Oswego, New York, NY: “Oswego is located on Lake Ontario in north-central New York and promotes itself as “The Port City of Central New York.” Oswego is the namesake for communities in Montana, Oregon, Illinois, and Kansas” (The City of Oswego, 2017).

Syracuse, New York, NY: “This is the fifth most populated city in New York State. It has one of the largest and newest malls in New York called Destiny U.S.A. Mall” (Miner, S. (2009).

Los Angeles, California, CA: Taking two weeks of vacation, this foreign girl decided to make a trip to California. Los Angeles is the cultural, financial, and commercial center of Southern California, and it is the second most populated city in the United States. Also, it is the most populated city in California and is the center of the nation's film and television industry. It is famous for its Hollywood sign, Paramount Pictures, Universal Studios, and Warner Brothers. These places offer behind the scene tours. On Hollywood Boulevard one finds TCL Chinese Theatre with the footprints of many actors; and the Walk of Fame, which honors thousands of famous people.

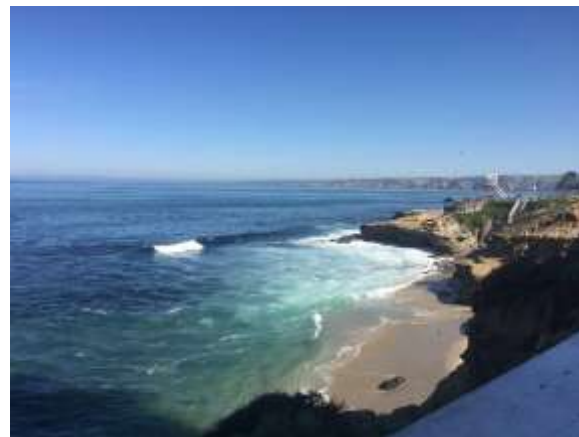
(Discover Los Angeles, 2017)

San Diego, California, CA: This city on the Pacific Coast of California is known for its beaches, warm climate, and parks, which include the huge Balboa Park and the San Diego

Zoo. Also, there are numerous art galleries, art studios, museums, aquariums, and gardens. A large naval fleet and an aircraft carrier were turned into a museum there, and are open to the public. San Diego is the eighth-largest city in the United States and the second-largest in California. This city is amazing. While there, the author went to the parks and enjoyed some time downtown. They went to beaches like Pacific Beach, La Joya Beach, and Sunset Cliffs.

(San Diego, 2017).

Picture 10. Hollywood sign and La Joya Beach, California, CA



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (Hollywood sign and La Joya Beach. 2017). Hollywood sign and La Joya Beach, California, CA. Los Angeles and San Diego, CA.

Chicago, Illinois: “Illinois has the 5th largest body of fresh water in the world, and it has the third-most populated city in the United States. It is located along Lake Michigan” (City of Chicago, 2017). The alien and some Colombian friends decided to go on a weekend trip to this fabulous city and visit the best places. They went to downtown Chicago, the Chicago Theatre, the 'L', the Navy Pier, Millennium Park, the Field Museum, and Willis Tower. They ate pizza at one of the best places in this city. Then they went to the Skydeck in Chicago. They took

pictures of the best view of the city, and went to the Chicago Wheel.

Aspen, Colorado: “Located in Colorado's Rocky Mountains, Aspen is a ski resort town and a year-round destination for outdoor recreation. Aspen is situated in a remote area of the Rocky Mountains' Sawatch Range and Elk Mountains along the Roaring Fork River” (City of Aspen Colorado, 2017). The author’s cousin lives in this beautiful village, and they decided to visit her for a week in the fall. The girls went to different natural places, such as the Maroon Bells, Hanging Lake Trail and the Colorado National Monument.

Picture 11. Hanging Lake Trail and the Colorado National Monument, Colorado, CO.



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (Hanging Lake Trail and the Colorado National Monument.

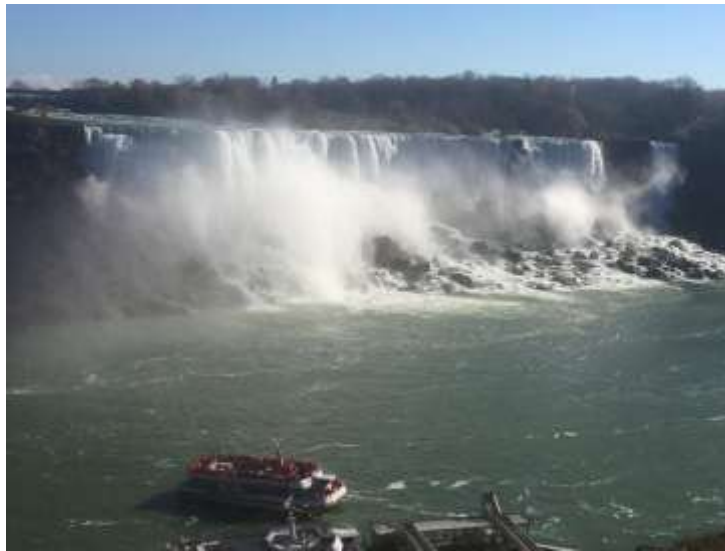
2016). Hanging Lake Trail and the Colorado National Monument, Colorado, CO. Aspen, CO.

4.2.2 Places Outside the United States.

Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada: Because of living so close to Canada, the foreign girl decided to get a Canadian visa and take a trip and see the famous waterfalls. This way she could observe them much better than from the American side and take better photos. She went to the Dinosaur Adventure Park, went golfing, shopping, and walked through the streets to

learn about this city.

Picture 12. Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada.



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (Niagara Falls. 2017). Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada. Niagara River.

Niagara on the Lake, Ontario, Canada: “This town is located on the shores of Lake Ontario and at the mouth of the Niagara River” (Explore Ontario – Discover Niagara on the lake, 2017). During the winter season, the author decided to take a trip around Canada with other friends. When the group went to Niagara on the Lake, they experienced this beautiful village, visited souvenir shops, ate traditional chocolates, and went to Queen's Beach.

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: This is Canada's capital, which is located in the southeastern part of Ontario. It is near the city of Montréal and the U.S. border. On the Ottawa River is Parliament Hill. It has grand Victorian architecture and museums, like the Victoria Memorial Museum (museum of nature). Since it was winter, the foreigner wanted to attend the Winterlude Festival, an annual fair in Ottawa. There are so many things to see during Ottawa's enchanting snow-covered season, such as an aerobics show and Irish dancers. They went tubing and saw wonderful ice sculptures.

(Ottawa Canada's Capital, 2017).

Toronto, Ontario, Canada: This is a major Canadian city along Lake Ontario's northwestern shore. It's the most populous city in Canada. It is the provincial capital of Ontario and is the fourth most populous city in North America. It is a global city. Toronto is an international centre of business, finance, arts, and culture, and it is widely recognized as one of the most multicultural and cosmopolitan cities in the world. To learn a little about this city, the alien went downtown, which is similar to Times Square in New York but smaller. They went to the science museum (Ontario Science Centre), the aquarium (Ripley's Aquarium Of Canada), and took a picture of the CN Tower.

(Toronto, 2017)

Picture 13. CN Tower, Toronto, Ontario, Canada



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (Thruway Toronto. 2017). CN Tower, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Toronto, Canada.

4.3 Living a Year in a Foreign Country

After having lived for a year in the United States, this author learned a lot about the way

people live in America, its culture, customs, traditions, and thinking. Each state is different, mainly by the seasons of the year. In the state where the new English speaker lived, they passed the four seasons. This helped them to understand that winter is long and people are more sedentary, they stay at home or just go to work and study. While the summer is short, the people can do many activities and enjoy more time in the city.

Regarding cuisine, this country is characterized by fast food, canned, packaged and all ready to use; while fruits and vegetables are hardly available. The world spins around technology and practicality; home appliances such as dishwasher, dryer, vacuum, and others are used daily. It is a completely accelerated life, where the people only work, there is no time for holidays and it's very unusual to have vacations. Punctuality and discipline are fundamental values in this country. People are very independent, and heavy jobs are for both men and women, so there is no gender difference. The car is used more than in other countries, and is for personal use from 16 years old. Purchases are mainly online, using the credit card more than cash. In addition to living with the host family, there were so many things this foreign girl experienced, from going to the supermarket, going to church every Sunday, going on vacation, and sharing every moment and celebration. Each of these experiences was new and different. As for the tourism perspective, from the author's personal experience, it was obvious that the area is visited by tourists from all over the country and abroad, during any time of the year, due to the main attraction of Niagara Falls, and the great diversity of activities that happen during the different seasons of the year. In addition, it has easy access and nice weather in summer. Tourists arrive with the goal of finding everything in one place: nature, culture, history, adventure, beaches, and fun for all ages, tastes, and preferences. All are easily found in this area.

5. Chapter 4: Tourist Consultation

5.1 City of Tonawanda, New York, USA

Tonawanda is a city located in Erie County, south across the Erie Canal from North Tonawanda and the Niagara River, and north of Buffalo, in the state of New York, United States and it's part of the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metropolitan area.

Table 1 Characteristics of the City of Tonawanda

Characteristics	Tonawanda
Population	American, 15.130 (2016)
Language	English
Weather	4 Seasons, 58°F (14°C) average, Wind E at 10 mph (16 km/h), 86% Humidity.
Food	American

By: Author, 2017

(City of Tonawanda New York, 2017)

5.1.1 Economy.

The unemployment rate in Tonawanda is 3.70%, with job growth of 0.68%. Future job growth over the next ten years is predicted to be 37.66%. The sales tax rate is 8.75% and income tax is 6.45%. The income per capita is \$25,238, which includes all adults and children. The median household income is \$46,026.

Table 2 Jobs Helping the City's Economy

Jobs	Percentages
• Management, business, finance	27.63%
• Sales, office, administrative support	21.58%
• Healthcare support	18.16%
• Building maintenance	11.84%

By: Author, 2017

(Brown, 2011).

5.1.2 Historic Sites.

Kibler High School, Tonawanda (25th Separate Company) Armory, and U.S. Post Office-Tonawanda.

5.1.3 Cultural Activities and Events.

Canal Fest, Gateway Harbor, landmarks, and NFL team.

(City of Tonawanda New York, 2017)

5.1.4 Main Attractions and Activities.

Table 3 Main Attractions and Activities

Nature	Activities for kids	History	Activities for adults
Niawanda Park	Adventure Landing	Elmlawn Memorial Park	Bars & Clubs
Isle View	Escape Room	Historical Society of the	Buffalo
County Park	Games	Tonawandas Museum	Battleground
Aqua Lane Park	Gear Rentals	Performances	Bowling Alleys
	Games on LAN		Golf Courses

By: Author, 2017

(Other Outdoor Activities in Tonawanda, 2017)

5.1.5 Other Characteristics.

Table 4 Other Information

State	Population	Capital city	Most populous city	Coordinates
New York	19,745,289 (2016)	Albany	New York City	43°00'40"N 78°52'39"W

By: Author, 2017

(City of Tonawanda New York, 2017)

5.2 Tourist Analysis of the City of Tonawanda, NY, USA

To enhance the cultural exchange experience and further the au pair's Tourism and Hotel Management education, a tourist analysis of the City of Tonawanda was made. In general in New York State tourism is divided by activities to do and cities to visit, according to the

season of the year.

Tonawanda is a small city, a suburb of Buffalo (the second largest city of this state). Most people confuse New York State with the city of the same name, because the state is large; but the city is very popular, important, and many business, tourism, economic, and population centers are located there. New York City is located in the south of the state, while Buffalo is located north and close to Canada. Between the two cities there is a distance of 7 hours by car or 1 hour by airplane (372 driving miles). Tonawanda is inhabited mostly by adults and children, is a very quiet city. Therefore people prefer to spend time in Buffalo or its surroundings. The services sector and the economy of Tonawanda are handled in Buffalo, so this analysis is about that city. Buffalo is recognized as a tourist city; it welcomes tourists from all over the world who come to visit Niagara Falls, the main tourist attraction. This city is on the border with Canada, and borders Lake Erie (one of the Great Lakes located between the United States and Canada). It has cultural and natural attractions, which attract tourists generally in summer. Living a year in this city, it was possible to analyze that in some times of the year, the tourists increase; for example in summer, at holidays, annual events, and celebrations (such as St. Patrick's Day, July 4th, or big concerts). Buffalo is a city for nature lovers; is characterized by its parks, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, and zoo, where the people can observe birds and different animals. (Priebe, 2002).

Picture 14. Mckinley Monument



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (Downtown Buffalo. 2016). McKinley Monument. Buffalo, NY.

Unlike Colombia, most bars are not for dancing, they are for watching sports and enjoying these exciting games with family and friends. In these bars one can drink cocktails, home-made or imported beers and wines and taste different food, like the best chicken wings in the USA (it's a chicken wing slathered in a mixture of hot sauce, butter and fried up crispy, and served with blue cheese dressing, celery and carrot sticks). Another traditional bar food is beef on weck, a sandwich consisting of slices of tender, juicy, slow-roasted beef layered on a kummelweck roll (a Kaiser roll topped with caraway seeds and Kosher salt) and traditionally garnished with horseradish. These are two dishes characteristic of this city. The tourist infrastructure corresponding to the facilities offered by the city of Buffalo is well defined. This city has 289 restaurants, including American, Mexican, Venezuelan, Italian, Chinese, and Indian; many of these are in different suburbs of this city. There are 84 bars or clubs with different kinds of music. For accommodation 88 lodging

establishments are available for a weekend or a long vacation. The city is accessible by car, bus, plane, and train (the latter can be used mainly if you travel to Canada or cities near New York). It has 2 main airports, "Buffalo Niagara International Airport" and "Niagara Falls International Airport". There are 5 places to get tourist information, and the main one is called "The Buffalo Niagara Visitor Center" (Buffalo Niagara Visitor Center, 2017). There you can find tourist brochures listing the main attractions of the city, maps, and explanations of the annual activities and celebrations; or you can consult the information on the website. Interesting aspects to consider in this city are these: the residents are called "Buffalonians" and the city's nicknames include "The Queen City", "The Nickel City", and "The City of Good Neighbors". (Priebe, 2002).

Picture 15. Bison Buffalo Sculpture



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (Downtown Buffalo. 2016). Bison Buffalo Sculpture. Buffalo, NY.

Projects Underway in Buffalo.

Capitalizing on the Natural and Cultural Assets: The mayor of Buffalo is helping the region realize its potential as a top U.S. tourist destination by leveraging natural and cultural assets in a more systematic, creative, and collaborative manner.

43 North Competition: This is an ambitious competition that began in 2014 and is held every year to attract innovators and entrepreneurs from around the world. The competition is designed to generate new business in Western New York, support early-stage business growth, and attract additional funding to the region.

(WNY Regional Economy Development Council, 2017).

The Main Architectural and Tourist Places in Buffalo.

Table 5 Architectonic and Tourist Places

Architectural, emblematic and monumental buildings	Tourist places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guaranty / Prudential Building • St Joseph's Cathedral • Richardson Olmsted Complex • Ellicott Square Building • Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site • Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin D. Martin House Complex • Elmwood Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided historical tours • Boat tours • The Buffalo Zoo • Coca-Cola Field • KeyBank Center • Tours of bars, clubs, and pubs by bike • Canalside • Forest Lawn Cemetery • Silo City

By: Author, 2017

Picture 16. St. Joseph's Cathedral



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (Downtown Buffalo. 2016). St Joseph's Cathedral. Buffalo, NY.

The Main Natural and Cultural Places in Buffalo.

Table 6 Natural and Cultural Places

Museums	Theaters, concerts and shows	Parks and natural gardens
• The Buffalo History Museum	• Buffalo Theater District	• Tiff Nature Preserve
• Buffalo & Erie County Naval and Military Park	• Irish Classical Theatre Company	• Erie Basin Marina Gardens
• Pierce-Arrow Museum	• Alleyway Theatre	• Larkin Square
• Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin D. Martin House Complex	• Shea's Performing Arts Center	• Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens
• Albright-Knox Art Gallery		• Delaware Park
• Buffalo Museum of Science		

By: Author, 2017

(Richter, 2015).

In conclusion, the city of Buffalo is recognized for being a beautiful city, registered by the state of New York as one of the top destinations to visit. Its cultural attractions are considered historical and the natural attractions are striking. If you want to enjoy the contact with nature and history, it's the perfect city with many activities, mainly in summer. Also, the City of Tonawanda is a relaxed and peaceful city where the people know each other; you can take part in recreation and relaxation activities along the Niagara River, one of the main places where you can go and share time with the family.

5.3 Main Tourist Attractions of the Region.

Niagara Falls: is the collective name for three waterfalls that straddle the international border between Canada and the United States; more specifically, between the province of Ontario and the state of New York. They form the southern end of the Niagara Gorge.

From largest to smallest, the three waterfalls are the Horseshoe Falls (the most powerful waterfall in North America, as measured by vertical height and flow rate), the American Falls, and the Bridal Veil Falls. Niagara Falls is famous for its beauty and its valuable source of hydroelectric power.

(Niagara Falls, 2017).

Picture 17. View of niagara falls from the observatory



[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (Niagara Falls. 2017). View of niagara falls from the observatory. Niagara River.

Table 7 Characteristics of Niagara Falls, New York, USA

Characteristics	Niagara Falls
Location	Border of Ontario, Canada, and New York, United States
Address	Niagara Falls, NY 14303
Coordinates	43.0799°N 79.0747°W
Type	Cataract
Watercourse	Niagara River
Bridges	Rainbow Bridge, Whirlpool Rapids Bridge

Elevation	325 ft
Height	167 ft (51 m)
Number of drops	3
Flow rate	84,760 cubic feet per second

By: Author, 2017

The Main Activities to Do in Niagara Falls.

Table 8 Activities

Activities	
• Cave of the Winds	• look and take pictures at Niagara Falls
• Niagara Falls State Park	• Skylon Tower Observation Deck
• Bridal Veil Falls	• Prophet Isaiah’s Second Coming House
• Old Falls Street	• Polly King Art Gallery
• Schoellkopf Power Station	• Whirlpool State Park
• Boat Tours	• Niagara Wax Museum of History
• Hyde Park	• Three Sisters Island
• Niagara wine trail	• Niagara Gorge trail
• Aquarium of Niagara	• Devil’s Hole State Park
• Niagara Science Museum	

By: Author, 2017

(Things to do in Niagara Falls, 2017).

Projects Underway in Niagara Falls.

Wonder Falls Resort: The project will be a locally-themed entertainment complex involving an indoor waterpark highlighting natural features in the region; a new hotel tower with rooftop dining; a Daredevil Adventure Center, an indoor family amusement facility; and various other retail and food and beverage venues. The new resort is the latest step in the state’s work to help transform the former Rainbow Mall site, following the development of Niagara County Community College’s new Niagara Falls Culinary Institute. With eight million tourists traveling to Niagara Falls each year, more than most U.S. National Parks, and nearly double the draw of the Grand Canyon, the resort is designed to encourage visitors to extend their stay in the city and view Niagara Falls as more of a year-round destination.

Riverway Project: Enhancing access to the Waterfront and to Niagara Falls State Park, it is rebuilding and restoring the south of Niagara Falls to improve visual and physical access to the various natural and cultural features along the Niagara River by removing the limited-access expressway that currently exists and replacing it with an at-grade parkway that will reunite downtown Niagara Falls with its most valuable and famous asset, the falls.

Expanding State Park Programming in Niagara Falls: Under the governor's investment strategy, New York State is supporting this vital tourism industry by improving recreational activities mainly along the Niagara River to facilitate hiking, birding, rock climbing, rappelling, zip-lining, and fishing in the gorge and at other state parks along the gorge rim; new/enhanced trail heads; as well as facilities to support winter activities like cross country skiing and snow shoeing.. This exciting new programming will be designed to increase the number of visitors and boost the tourism and local economy of the City of Niagara Falls by extending the stays of visitors.

(WNY Regional Economy Development Council, 2017).

In conclusion, Niagara Falls is recognized as the main natural tourist attraction of New York State, generating employment and increasing the economy of the city, region, and state; thanks to the tourists who come to observe one of the most amazing wonders of the natural world.

6. Importance of Cultural Exchange to a Tourism and Hotel Manager

Being able to speak the English language is a very important aspect for a qualified worker in any tourism sector. In today's world, it is necessary for any field, in order to be competitive and grow professionally. Colombia is becoming a tourist country, where more and more tourists come from countries like the United States, Canada, or countries in Europe and Asia; therefore English is the way of communication, it's a universal language. Nowadays, international relations are common; businessmen from other countries are arriving, agreements are being signed with travel agencies, tourist information offices, hotels, and restaurants that offer tourist products. All this communication is being done in English. For a tourism and hotel manager, English is fundamental to any field, from tourist information to the management and promotion of tourist destinations or activities, through mediation, lodging, and transportation companies. For this reason a cultural exchange experience in an English-speaking country is an extraordinary opportunity, economically and educationally, in order to improve the level of English of the participant. This ability is acquired living in that country and practicing daily, helping to overcome a fear of speaking, improving fluency, communication, and written and reading skills. In addition to this important aspect, cultural exchange allows a person to have a planned immersion in another culture, in order to change his or her thinking, learn new things, and then discover a vision of real life. In the short term one can perceive a different lifestyle. Flexibility is a quality that not everyone has, but if the cultural differences such as food, environment, language, and customs are overcome, it can be said that the capacity to develop in different situations has been acquired. In a cultural exchange, daily difficulties arise and are overcome, demonstrating independence and strength to adapt in the best way to any situation, as well as building confidence in oneself. Several advantages that are acquired can be

mentioned: the organization and planning of a trip, such as buying a plane ticket, deciding the places to visit, finding lodging and transportation; demonstrating the ability to budget and plan. Long term advantages to cultural exchange can be observed socially and personally, and improve work skills by increasing creativity and the ability to make good decisions.

7. Conclusions

Cultural exchange is an excellent program to learn and improve skills in another language, acquiring knowledge and skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking; improving the communication in this language and obtaining more opportunities in the future.

Benefits of a cultural exchange include learning about many cultures, making friends from different countries, experiencing this especially in a North American classroom where language is studied with enthusiasm, developing activities led by an American teacher and working in groups, working toward a common goal, and learning a second language. All these help one to respect different ways of thinking and seeing life.

Cultural exchange makes dreams come true, traveling to and experiencing wonderful places, participating in different activities which become the best memories. Regardless of the difficulties, there are always solutions to any eventuality that may arise.

Cultural exchange also helps one to grow as a person, facing challenges, strengthening the personality and developing communication skills, as well as self-confidence, flexibility, versatility, and openness to new experiences. The successful person will be able to live and develop in different places and spaces.

The program offers professional growth, providing a vision of the world and the tourist sector. After completing this program, the au pair begins to make more precise decisions with clear ideas, and practices the values developed, such as responsibility, independence, creativity, and international business knowledge. These are some of the short and long term benefits for a hotel and tourism manager.

Another benefit is that the experience facilitates saving money, because this program allows one to live with an American family, to study, and to work at the same time. One also learns to appreciate Colombia for its culture, natural wealth, people and cuisine.

8. Recommendations

To carry out the cultural exchange, it's necessary to be patient in all circumstances; at the beginning, during the program, and at the end. There are always difficulties and many steps that must be carried out, so one should always be optimistic, steady, and dedicated.

When the program begins, the au pair signs a contract, and she needs to fulfill all the obligations and rules dictated there. She has to work caring for children with love and responsibility. This work is serious, and she must always give the best of herself, earning the trust and respect of the family, in order to have a successful experience.

While undertaking this experience, it is important to be surrounded by people who speak the native language, English; because the best way to improve is by practicing it every day. It is helpful to study, to read, to listen to music, and to watch movies. In this way the program will be more enriching and the goal will be met.

It's advisable to have a good conversational level of English before starting the exchange, this provides self-confidence, and helps one make good friends, travel and learn. This program is designed to improve English skills and not to learn them.

Unlike Colombia, the United States is a country where driving is an indispensable aspect. It's the culture, and young people start driving from 16 years old. It is difficult to get anywhere without driving, so it's important to be responsible, driving with other people. Before applying for this program it's necessary to have experience and continue practicing driving daily; this will help the au pair to have security and confidence driving on highways.

Becoming an au pair is for independent people, who adapt easily to living in other places with different weather and customs, people who can travel alone by car, train, or plane, who

can live away from home, from the family, and can communicate with people of different cultures.

Before traveling, it's important for the young woman to know the culture and surroundings of the city where she will live, including, for example, the geographical location, population type, standard of living, tourism, history, nature, and attractions offered by that place. This will allow her to imagine the experience of spending a year in that place. This experience should be lived to the fullest. It is an excellent opportunity, so when the person decides to do it, she must try to take advantage of all the benefits, to enrich her personal and professional growth; besides visiting and understanding the places that were longed for.

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11. Attachments

Attachment A. Registration



Cultural Care
Au Pair

¡Quiero ser Au Pair!

Nombres: Gabriela
Dirección: calle 157 #154-137
Departamento: Santander
E-mail: gabybubu123@gmail.com
Hora para contactarle: 9 a 12 pm y 2 a 9 pm.
Fecha de viaje prevista: (mes/año) Julio 2016
Educación posterior al bachillerato: Universidad
Trabajo actual / semestre actual: ESTUDIANTE OCTAVO SEMESTRE
Describa su experiencia con niños: Cuidado de niños en jardines, Familiares y amigos.
¿Cómo se enteró de Cultural Care Au Pair? Por medio de otras Au Pairs
Fecha de inscripción: 27/10/2015
Nivel de inglés: Intermedio

Apellidos: Buitrago Bueno
Ciudad: Floridablanca - Cañaveral
Fecha de nacimiento (M/D/A): 10/03/1994
Tel: 6904098 Celular: 3118331559
Cedula: 1098761211
Licencia de conducción Si No Aprendiendo
Nombre del colegio/universidad: U.P.T.C

Por favor envíele un folleto a mi amigo(a):

Nombres: Aida Vanessa
Dirección: Calle 103 #13-31 Torre 2 Apt 1208
Departamento: Santander
E-mail: asgon.5@gmail.com
Apellidos: Suárez González
Ciudad: Bucaramanga
Fecha de nacimiento (si la sabes): 10/05/1994
Tel: 6375717 Celular: 3173385283

Attachment B. My Profile

Gabriela Buitrago Bueno



Country of birth: Colombia
Current residence: Floridablanca, Colombia
Nationality/Citizenship: Colombia
Date of birth: October 03, 1994
Gender: Female

Why I want to be an au pair:

Because, it has been my dream all my life. I think that I have all the characteristics required to apply for this job. During my life time, I have acquired a lot of experience for this job.

MY PROFILE	
Name:	Gabriela Bultrago Bueno
Au Pair Number:	COA116145
SEVIS Number:	N0018882207
Home Country Phone:	576904098
Home Country Mobile Phone:	573118331559
US Phone:	(716) 930-4977 
Email:	gabybubu123@gmail.com
Date of Birth:	10/3/1994
Birthplace:	Tunja, COLOMBIA
Residence:	COLOMBIA
Citizenship:	COLOMBIA
Departure Gateway:	BOG Bogota El Dorado Airport

Attachment C. Host family confirmation

Dear Gabriela,

This makes it official! We are so pleased that the **Michaels family in NY** would like to welcome you into their home as their au pair. You found a great match by learning about each other through applications and important conversations. We hope you are as excited as they are.

Your next steps

Step 1: Confirm your placement and your departure date.

The date is set. You will begin at our training school in New York on 07/25/2016 and arrive to your host family on 07/29/2016.

Please contact [+5717435253](tel:+5717435253) / 743 4998 / 743 5232 or COcustomerservice@culturalcare.com to confirm your placement today or tomorrow at the latest and to discuss the next steps.

Step 2: Secure your visa

Your next task is to apply for your visa at the US Embassy. Your local office will send you all the necessary forms and will let you know what you need to do to schedule an appointment. Be sure to fill out the documents as soon as you receive them to avoid any delay.

Please remember to keep checking your online account for updated information about your host family and flight as you get closer to your departure date.

See you soon,
Cultural Care Au Pair

Cultural Care Au Pair
EF Center Boston
One Education Street Cambridge MA 02141
Tel: **617 619 1095** Skype: sasha.williams.ef
www.culturalcare.com

Attachment D. DS 2019



U.S. Department of State

CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR EXCHANGE VISITOR STATUS (J-NONIMMIGRANT)

OMB APPROVAL NO 1405-0119
09/30/2013
ESTIMATED BURDEN TIME: 45 min
*See Page 2

Form containing personal information of Gabriela Buotrigo Bueno, program details for Cultural Care Au Pair, and official signatures from Paul R. Fleming and Robin Sommer.

Attachment E. Cultural Care certificate



A QUIEN PUEDA INTERESAR

Por medio de la presente certificamos que la señorita **Gabriela Buitrago Bueno** identificada con cedula de ciudadanía número 1.098.761.211 se encuentra inscrita en el programa de intercambio Cultural Care Au Pair a los Estados Unidos.

A través de este programa **Gabriela Buitrago Bueno** vivirá por un año con una familia anfitriona americana, trabajará en el cuidado de niños y cursará algunos créditos académicos como requisito del Departamento de Estado del Gobierno Americano.

Gabriela Buitrago Bueno iniciará su programa el 25 de Julio del 2016 regresando a Colombia el 25 de julio del 2017.

Cualquier duda o pregunta sobre el programa estaré gustosa de proporcionarla.

Esta certificación es expedida en Bogotá, a los 28 días del mes de Junio del 2016 a petición de la interesada.

Cordialmente,

Jessica Ferrucho
Regional Manager

Cultural Care Au Pair
Calle 98 No. 9A-41 Of. 503
Bogotá
Colombia

Télefonos: +57 1 7435253- 7434998 Ext 22
Jessica.ferrucho@culturalcare.com
Skype: culturalcareaupair
www.culturalcare.com

Attachment F. Training School certificate



CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

This is to certify that:

Gabriela Buitrago Bueno

*has successfully completed 32 hours of training at the
Cultural Care Au Pair Training School.*

07/27/2016
Date

Elizabeth Buena
School Director



Attachment G. Host family gift

D 88

Welcome to the USA! We can't wait to meet you in person.
Enjoy your stay in NYC! –

Love, The Michaels

ONE TICKET TO:



The New York City Tour
— and —
Top of the Rock

NEW YORK, NEW YORK



Attachment I. Erie Community College Registration



Start Here. Go Anywhere!

September 12, 2016

Gabriela Buitrago Bueno
448 Delaware St
Tonawanda NY 14150

Dear Student,

Welcome to Pre-Collegiate Studies Program that will help start your future today.

You have registered for:

ESL102ESL

- **ESL PRE-COLLEGIATE** (Tuesday & Thursdays) September 20th thru December 1st from 9:00– 12:00 noon at Erie Community College, City Campus, 45 Oak Street, Buffalo on M level room 50B

READING102CITYAM

- **Reading & Writing Course** (Monday & Wednesday) Course, September 12th thru November 16th from 9:00 – 12:00 noon at Erie Community College, City Campus, 45 Oak Street, Buffalo in room 112. November 7th and December 5th meeting in room 136.

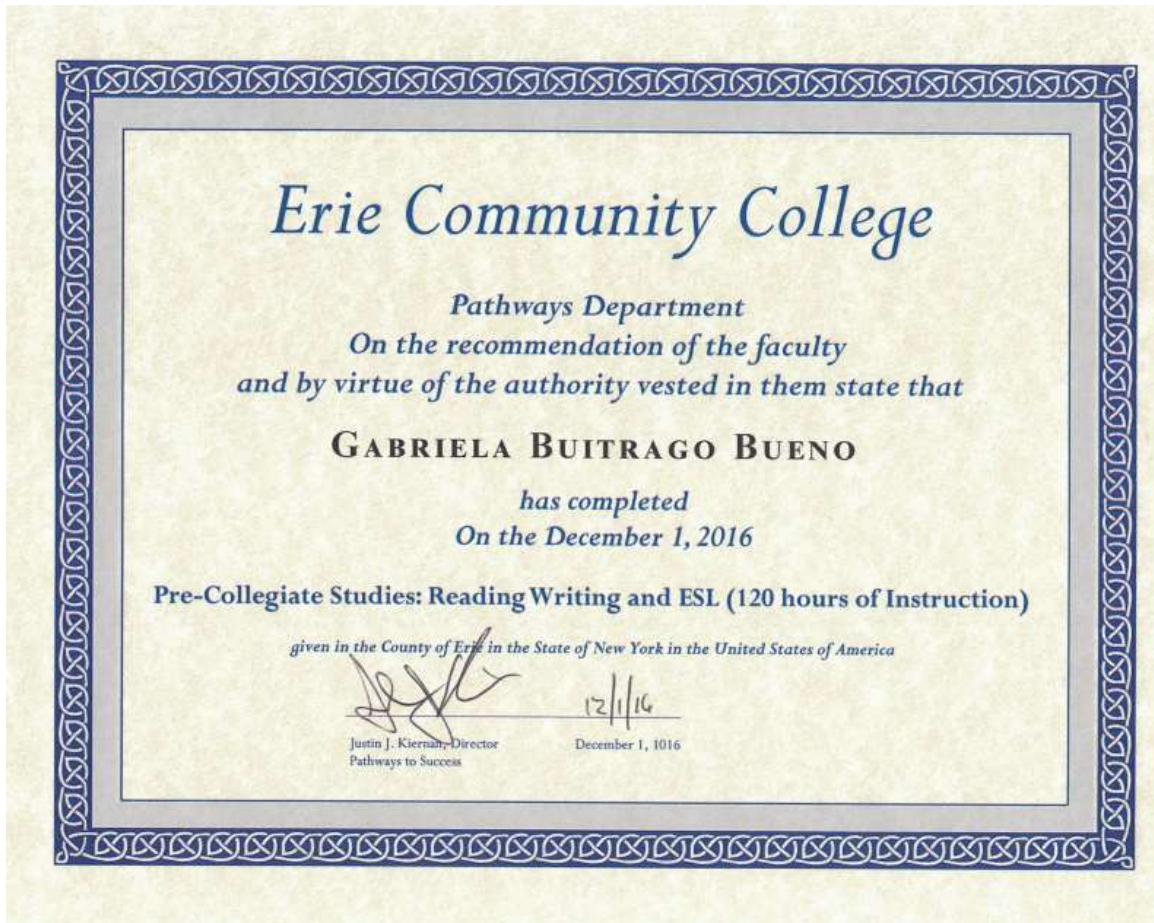
All students are responsible for 100% attendance, if a student is going to be absent they should inform, instructor or case manager. Erie Community College reserves the right to cancel any course in which registrations fall below the recommended number of students.

Again, welcome to ECC. If you have any questions contact Christina Annesi, 851-1104 City,

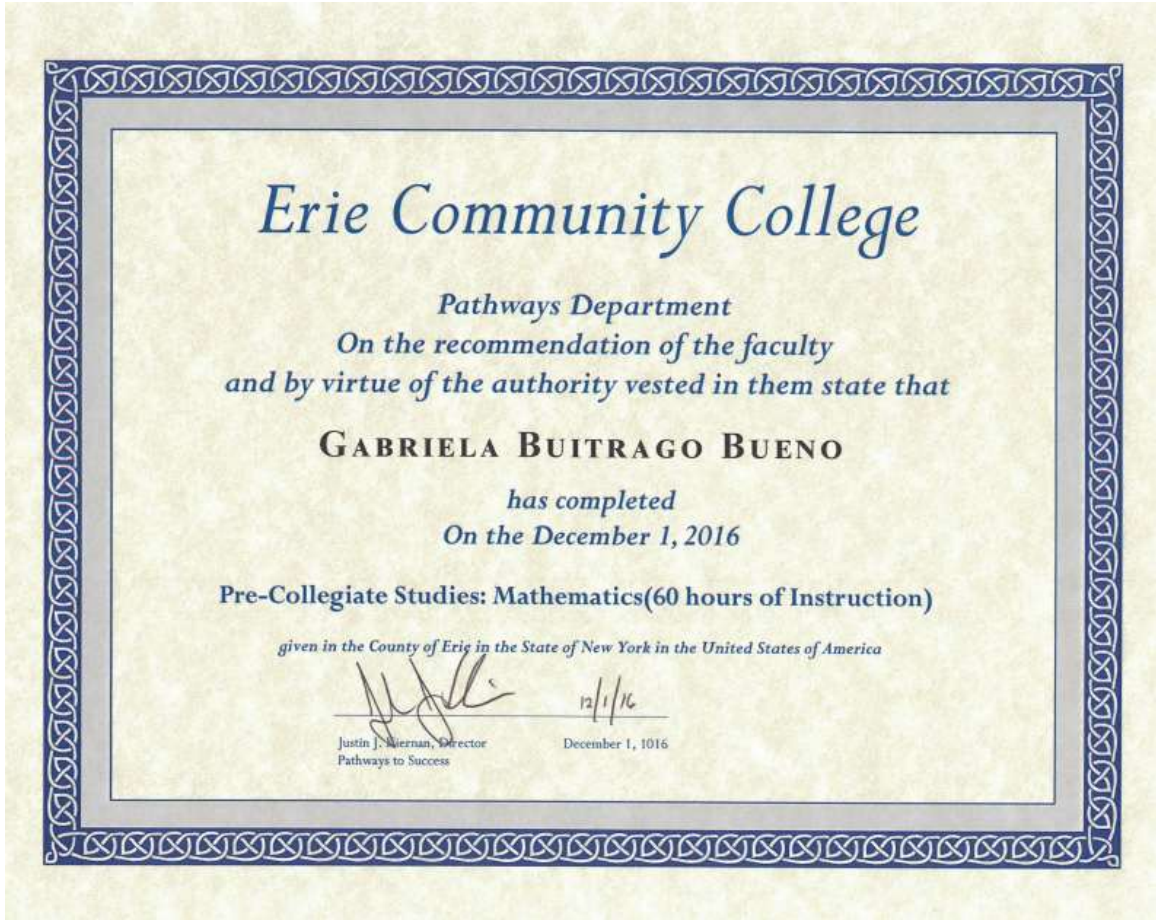
Very truly,

Pre-Collegiate Studies Program
Pathways Department

Attachment J. Erie Community College: Reading Writing and ESL certificate



Attachment K. Erie Community College: Mathematics certificate



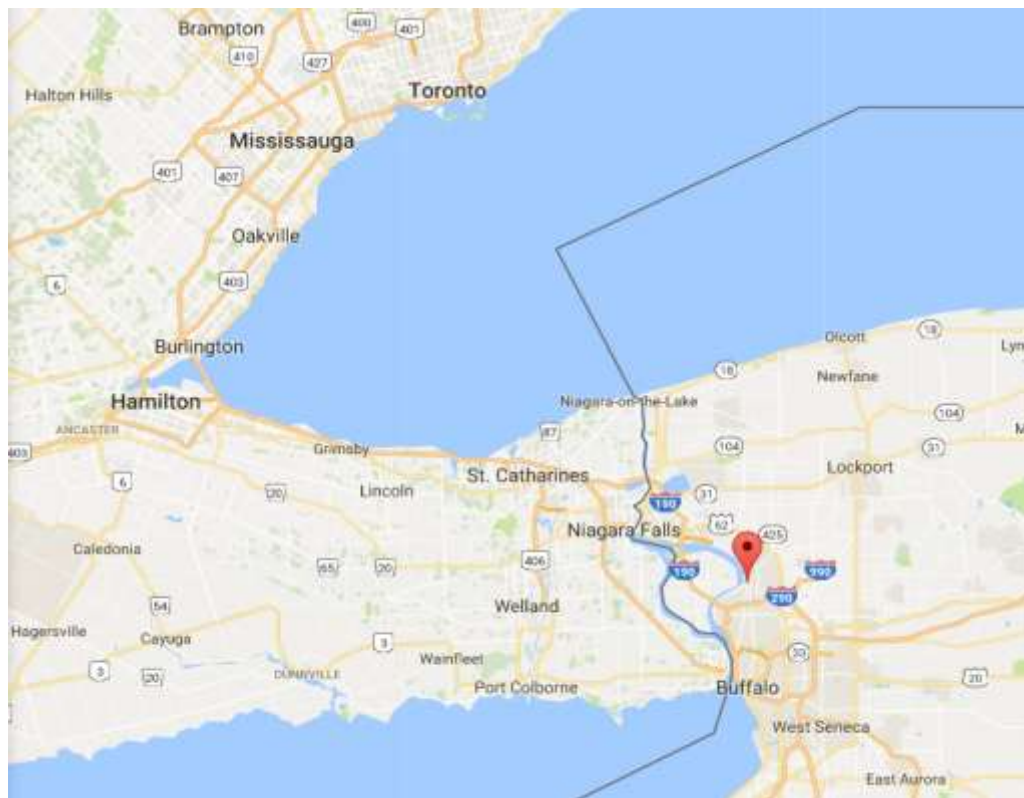
Attachment L. New York Maps.

Graph 1: Map of New York, NY.



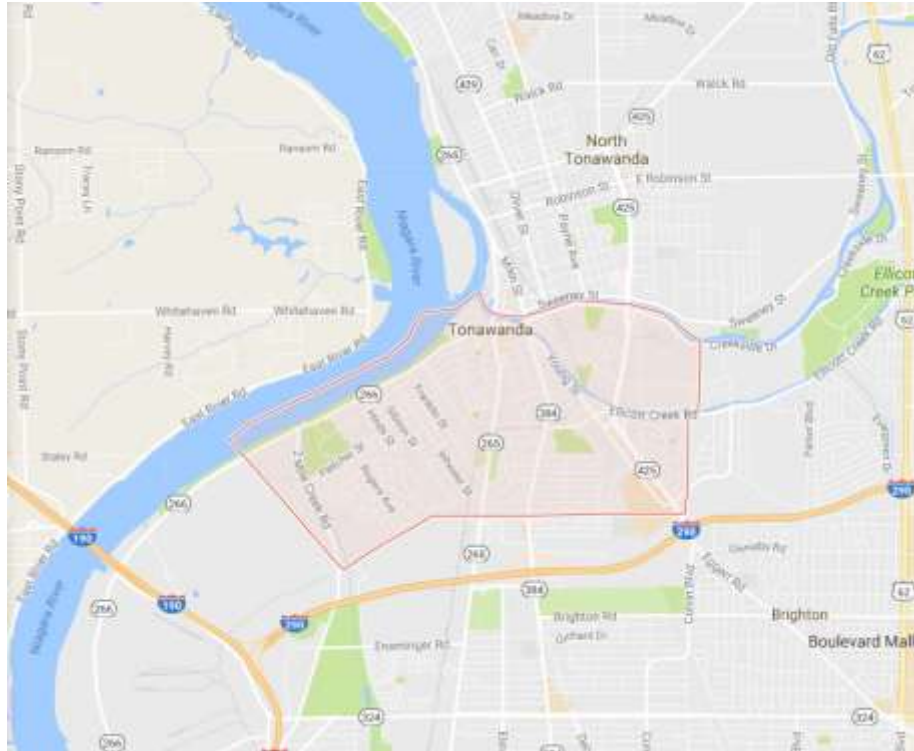
By: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Tonawanda,+NY+14150/>

Graph 2: Border between United States and Canada



By: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Tonawanda,+NY+14150/>

Graph 3: Map of the City of Tonawanda, New York, USA



By: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Tonawanda,+NY+14150/>

Attachment M. Photographic Evidences

Host Family



Host Family



Baylor Beach, Ohio, OH



Family Holidays



Thousand Islands, New York, NY



Host Kids Matthew and Marissa studying in the library



Baylor Beach, Ohio, OH

[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (2016 - 2017). Host Family.

Meetings with people from other Countries



Traveling through Canada



Au Pair meetings



Teacher and Classmates



Time Square New York, NY



Training school - Rockefeller Center



New Year's Day

[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (2016 - 2017). Meetings with people from other Countries.

North American Celebrations



Birthday



Halloween



Christmas



Valentine's Day



Saint Patrick's Day



Easter

[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (2016 - 2017). North American Celebrations.

Places Visited during the Cultural Exchange



Ottawa, Ontario, Canada



Toronto, Ontario, Canada



Maroon Bells, Aspen, Colorado, CO



Niagara Falls Lights Show, New York, NY



San Diego, California, CA



Lake Ontario, New York, NY

[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (2016 - 2017). Places Visited during the Cultural Exchange.

Living a year in a foreign country



Erie Community College



Niagara Falls, New York, NY



Restaurants



Niagara River



Buffalo & Erie County Naval and Military Park

[Picture of Gabriela Buitrago]. (2016 - 2017). Living a year in a foreign country.