

My last day of teaching in Ecuador, I walk to my classroom to find that the door was locked. I knocked and one of my students came out and told me "No puede entrar, no estamos listos." I was utterly confused what my group of thirty children between the ages of five and fifteen were up to, but I did as they said and I waited. When they finally let me in, they all shouted "Sorpresa" and I realized that they has been plotting all along.

However, this was not a typical surprise party. This was not planned by adults, but rather children who have no money. There were plates of skittles, oranges, popcorn, and a homemade cake (which was surprisingly delicious considering the youth of the bakers!). Students gave me cards, bracelets, pictures, and little trinkets to remember them by. I can honestly say that I have never cried so much in my life; I cried the entire hour I was there and the bus ride home. These children have nothing and all they really needed was someone to love them and believe in them, and that is what I strove to do. As I left, they begged me "no nos abandanes" which was probably the hardest thing my ears have ever heard.

I said my goodbyes with a heavy heart and waved from the window of the bus while the children cried in front of the building. But as I drove away, I knew that these children would stay with me forever. My room is filled with their pictures and my heart is filled with their love. They have taught me that my service does make a difference, even if it was only for two monthes. I impacted those children and they have forever impacted me.)

Without my knowledge of Spanish, I would not have been able to connect with these children or the other children I have served in Mexico and the United States. I would not have become so immersed in their culture and so attached to each student. My bilingualism has allowed to me serve and has increased my desire to keep on serving throughout my life.