

# RAYNA PANEK

Experienced Educator  
IPDS Colombia | February 2023



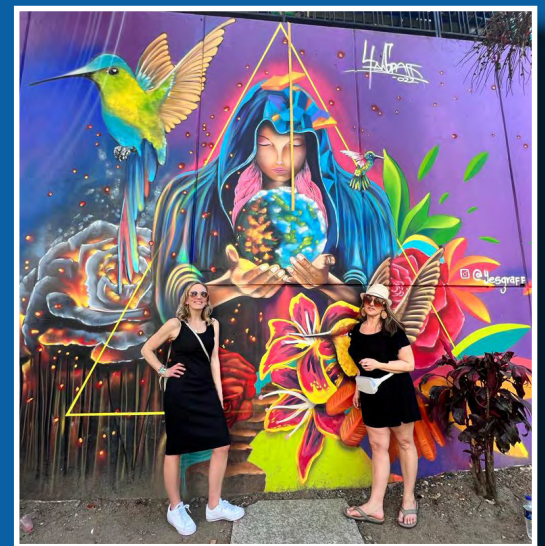
## SERENDIPITY

This program lit a fire that has been an ember for 20 years! While completing my associates degree at 21 years old I took a leap and studied abroad. In Spain I was so inspired by my professor's energy and passion as well as my experiences learning the language, with local families and embracing travel that I decided to return to Buffalo State to become a Spanish teacher. I went on to finish my master's in adolescent education and was so intrigued with language learning that I researched and wrote my thesis on incorporating second language into the elementary curriculum. I had 2 children and couldn't travel but always missed using Spanish while traveling. I became a Buffalo State PDS Mentor and was pleasantly surprised to see an email offering this experience in Colombia! Since returning, I've reached out to the professor who originally inspired me, revised my thematic unit to focus on the Madrigal (Colombia) family from Encanto, began creating international pen-pal connections, and have been planning my next trip to a Spanish-speaking country. I realized again...the world is my oyster!



## COFFEE & KINDNESS

The Concordia Coffee Tour was the best experience from start to finish! We enjoyed authentic *arepas* and *bunuelos* at the highest elevation, embraced breathtaking views, participated in the entire coffee process of "bean to beverage," and were invited into the home of Gloria, a kind and welcoming host.



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