

FAQ's

- **What sleeping arrangements need to be made for an exchange student?**
 - We ask that students have their own bed, but not necessarily their own room. Air mattresses are acceptable.
- **What do I do with my exchange student in the evening and on weekends?**
 - Many families feel like they need to entertain their exchange student. During the week, the students will be going on different field trips and doing a bunch of activities. They may be tired in the evening! Don't think that you have to spend a ton of money on tickets or activities. Do what you would do with your own kids! Soccer practice? – Take your exchange student. Aunt's birthday party? – Take your exchange student. Going fishing? – Take your exchange student! Simple family activities like hooking up the sprinkler in the backyard or having a bonfire are the type of cultural experiences these kids will enjoy.
- **What about video games and cellphones?**
 - If you are a family of gamers and that is how you spend your free time, then please feel free to allow video games/phone games. If you don't let your kids play video or phone games – then set the ground rules for what is allowable.
- **What do I feed my exchange student?**
 - We will host a dinner on the night families get matched up. This will give families a chance to talk with their exchange student about their preferences. We will let families be aware of any dietary/allergy concerns before they are matched. For the most part, these kids eat! We recommend even taking your student to the grocery store (it is an experience for them!). If you like to cook – have the exchange students join you in the kitchen to show them how you prepare the food. If your family eats out, please treat your exchange student as you would your own and pay for their meal.
- **What if my exchange student gets sick or hurt?**
 - The students do have insurance while they are here at camp. Families will be given this kind of information at the host family dinner night.
- **I really want to host, but I have a few conflicts with scheduling during camp.**
 - We will look at all situations individually. If students can still have a great camp and hosting experience, then arrangements can be made to work around scheduling conflicts as long as there are still spaces available for campers.
- **What if this just doesn't work out?**
 - If you have concerns – the sooner you tell the camp organizers, the soon solutions can be found! The goal of the camp and hosting experience is for it to be positive for EVERYONE!
- **Who can I contact with questions?**
 - Chelsey Schell – work 586-648-2525 x 2340 , cell 586-216-6589, email: cschell@abs.misd.net

The following document has more tips and guidelines about hosting an international student. Families have found this information to be helpful in the past.

HOSTING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

Hosting an international student can be a most rewarding experience – an opportunity to extend your family into a second culture. International students provide us the opportunity to look at familiar patterns through the eyes of those who grew up in a different country, speak a different language, and have different habits and expectations. Some of these differences may be hardly noticeable, while others may be surprising. Recognizing cultural differences, respecting them, and being able to accommodate them for the duration of the stay will broaden everyone's intercultural perspectives. The following information is a point of departure for conversations at home and discussions in the classroom, raising sensitivity and expanding awareness about how your student will participate in your family's daily life. It will also help anticipate awkward moments and perhaps prevent difficult situations.

- I. Expectations International Students Have of the United States
- II. Arriving at Home
- III. Meals
- IV. Daily Routines
- V. Telephone and Email Use
- VI. Laundry
- VII. Necessary Information for Your Guest
- VIII. Activities with International Students
- IX. What Do We Talk About?
- X. Host Family's Financial Obligations
- XI. What If Things Just Don't Work Out?
- XII. You Can Do It!

I. International Students Have Expectations of the United States

International students probably have expectations of life in the United States formed during the English-language learning experience in the classroom or from the media. Most have seen popular American movies and television series, and most likely their expectations have been shaped by these Hollywood images. As you well know, few families will match the image portrayed in school texts or movies. To get an idea of how this works, describe your image of their country and see how your guest reacts. Visitors will be eager to experience the United States. They will expect to encounter the stereotypes they may have formed, but they should also be open to dismantling them. Many have very specific images of what the U.S. is and how it operates. They know that school buses are yellow. They know about freeways, Los Angeles traffic jams, and probably a lot about New York. Expectations may be idealistic, even unrealistic, and their requirements of their host families may be based on these expectations. Students may have unrealistic ideas about the distances in the United States. When asked about what they would like to see or do, they may suggest something so far away that you are not at all prepared to accommodate that wish or at least surprised by such an excessive request.

II. Arriving at Home

They will be excited about this! Much of the information you give during the first hours will be lost in the initial confusion. When you first arrive at home, introduce your student to family members and pets.

Determine immediately how you would like your student to address you. Do you want it to be by first name? Mom and Dad? Mr. and Mrs.? Show your guest where she/he will sleep and where to put her/his things, then tour the house, pointing out where important things are located,

especially which bathroom to use and how to operate the tub or shower. Although it is important for your guest to know how appliances operate, this might be reserved for another time, when some of the excitement has settled and she/he will be more receptive to details such as how the microwave operates and which TV channels are more interesting than others.

III. Meals

Even if it is not common for your family to eat three meals a day, provide this opportunity to your guest. Treat your guest as you would your own children. Are you planning to have family dinners at certain times on certain days? If you want your guest to be there, make it clear when you expect them. Certain foods considered to be typically American and liked by most students may take some time to "grow" on your visitor. What are your thoughts about snacking? What are the limits? What is available? Is the refrigerator available for between-meal snacks? Are there limitations? Please make this clear to your guest.

IV. Daily Routines

Don't change your family's patterns to present the "typical" American family picture. If you do not normally eat breakfast together, don't start now. If there are times when everyone just goes to the refrigerator and helps themselves, continue to do that and invite your guest to participate. If you do laundry on certain days, tell your guest when and where to put clothes to be washed. If you go to church on Sundays, invite your guest to come along. If you do not normally go, don't go for your guest's sake, but do make it possible for them to go to church if desired. Discuss the daily routines. What time is "rise and shine"? Is the bathroom to be shared? Are you expecting your guest to participate in certain chores? Make their bed? Be ready to leave at a certain time? Is TV accessible at all times? Who sits where in front of the TV? What time do you expect everyone to be quiet for the night? Also be sensitive to the student's need for privacy and quiet time. When in doubt about how your guest is feeling, ask!

V. Telephone and Email Use

Telephone calls home can often lead to homesickness. Discourage your guest from excessively calling their family and friends. Telephone calls are also not as important anymore now that most families have email and Skype. Students should be given a chance to email or chat with their friends and families. Discourage hour-long sessions on the computer, as that prevents the students from being with their host families and fellow students.

VI. Laundry

What are your household procedures regarding laundry? Does everyone do his/her own? Should dirty clothing be in a certain place on a certain day? How will you know whether the clothes brought by your guest are appropriate for the washing machine?

VII. Necessary Information for Your Guest

Provide your guest with the home, work, and cellular numbers of family members or neighbors. Make certain that these numbers are written down and carried along with your address and directions from school to your house. It will be difficult for your student to orient them in the beginning, since the distinguishing features with which we identify our neighborhoods will be unfamiliar and difficult to remember for them. Make sure your guest has access into the house at all times. If you have a security alarm, make sure the guest understands how it works, or leave it unarmed for the duration of the stay. An informational packet will be given to you when you pick up your student that will give you information on medical treatment authority for your guests.

VIII. Activities with International Students

Everything will be interesting to the students, even if they do not show the appropriate enthusiasm. For many students, showing excitement about an experience is difficult. Some students may bubble with excitement, while others seem to shrug things off which you expect to be appreciated. Regard seeming indifference as a cultural variation. It is often interesting to observe how International guests react to a situation without apparent interest and then listen to them talk about it with great excitement to the other International students at school the following day. It may well be that some of the experiences your guest has while with you may not be understood until she/he returns home. Everyday life is also interesting. Grocery shopping, running errands, visiting neighbors, doing family projects, attending little league ball games, spending a day at work with someone from your family, taking a trip to the hardware store, etc., will be valuable experiences for your guest and will afford a detailed look into American life. Regard your guest as a typical student. Your invitation to accompany you may not be met with excitement. She/he may prefer to relax in front of the TV. While some relaxing may be appropriate, those opportunities ought to be balanced with worthwhile activities.

IX. What Do We Talk About?

Ask your student about his/her family, habits, food, work, etc. This discussion will give you significant information and will let you know where the cultural differences lie and what may be of interest to your student. Do not try to convert him/her. Try to explain the reasons for your thinking and discover the reasons for your guest's thinking.

X. Host Family's Financial Obligations

Treat your guest as you treat your own children. When you go out for meals or to an event, pay for your International student as you would pay for your own children. International students will have spending money of their own for souvenirs and snacks but are not expected to cover family expenses.

XI. What If Things Just Don't Work Out?

Even though the International students are screened prior to being accepted into the program, and even though care has been taken to match your family with the student according to what is known about each student, it occasionally happens that people simply were not meant to be together under the same roof. If that should be the case, talk to the lead teachers for assistance. Sometimes all it takes is a conversation to clear up differences. Sometimes it would simply be better for a student to be moved to a different home. This does not imply that you are a poor host or that you should tough it out. It may simply mean that this is an incompatible match.

XII. You Can Do It!

Have fun with the visit! This is an opportunity for you and your family to learn firsthand about another culture. In fact, you may find that you have begun a long-lasting international friendship. Hope that your son/daughter will have the opportunity to return the visit and gain as much from the visit as your guest gained from being with you. There will probably be some awkward moments, but those will pass. When in doubt, ask, and keep the dialogue going. You'll be surprised how quickly the time passes.