

The Friendship Journey
Nativity Student Exchange Program

**Handbook for Hosting Students and Teachers
from our Partner Schools**

The goal of The Friendship Journey is to increase understanding among students and adults of different nations by fostering friendships that will last a lifetime.



friendshipJOURNEY
time to change the world
NATIVITY, USA

Communication

- **Initial Contact:** The parents of hosting students email the parents of visiting students. The content of the communication should include the following:
 - An introduction to the family – names, ages, genders of all residing in the home. This includes any pets the hosting family may have.
 - Words of welcome to Cincinnati
 - A brief outline of what the family routine is on a school day and on the weekends. This gives the visiting student an idea of what to expect.
 - Questions about allergies, favorite foods, etc.

- Once the student has arrived in Cincinnati and is settled in with the host family, a quick email or text home to let the visiting student’s parent know that he/she has arrived safely is appropriate.

- Phone calls between parents and children during the first few days can often increase homesickness. If the visiting student is experiencing homesickness, the sound of a parent’s voice often makes it more difficult for the student to “leave home behind” and enter into the experience. Contact the visiting chaperone if the homesickness does not pass within 2 days.

Excursions / Field Trips / Sightseeing in Cincinnati

The natural desire is to show your visitor everything there is to see in Cincinnati. That’s impossible to do in one or two weeks and does not reflect how the typical American family lives.

Several field trips will be arranged by Nativity School. Typically they include a visit to the Newport Aquarium, Tour of The Great American Ballpark, the Museum Center or the Zoo.

Families are encouraged to keep to their schedule as much as possible. For example, the visiting student can accompany their host to soccer / basketball / volleyball practice. The coaches have consistently invited the visiting students to take part in the drills and/ or scrimmage.

Nativity has traditionally discouraged families from taking their visitor to Kings Island because of the considerable expense involved. It puts a strain on family finances to have to purchase tickets for the guest as well as several siblings. It is not typical for Nativity families to go to Kings Island, the Zoo and a baseball game within a one or two week span of time.

It is important that all host families understand the decision not to include places like Kings Island on the itinerary. If one or two visiting students go and the others don't, it sets up a competitive dynamic among the visiting students that is not helpful for their group or for the Nativity host families.

Family Life in America

Part of getting to know someone is to understand how they live. Where there is a temptation to take your guest "everywhere" and show him/her "everything", that is not practical. It gives a false impression of how American families live.

Several field trips to local points of interest will be arranged by Nativity School. Options will be discussed at the parent meeting head of hosting. Depending on the time of year, a Reds game may be feasible. It is important that the general range of activities be honored by each hosting family.

For some families, a visit to grandmother's house for Sunday dinner is what they do. Providing the visiting student with an explanation of what will happen and setting an expectation can help. For example, "Uncle John will be there and he will want to know all about sports in your country." The heads up gives the visiting student time to think about the response. Another example could be, "Grandmother's favorite dessert is her homemade pecan pie. Not everyone likes it. You might want to try it, but if you don't like it, you don't have to finish it."

Free Time – Sharing the Supervision

Our experience has been that visiting students often like to be with their friends from home for several reasons.

1. It's hard to speak and think in a foreign language – harder if your fluency is not that well developed. The opportunity to speak in your first language is a welcome respite from speaking English.
2. Until the student feels more at home, it's helpful to be with people who know you and are experiencing the same adjustment to a new culture and cuisine.

It has been helpful for host families to "help each other out" by arranging time for the visiting students to be together. That can be a pick up football / basketball game or a cookie bake date at one home for several of the visiting students. It may be helpful for host families to share trips to Target or the mall by taking several visiting students at once.

Gifts

It is customary that the visiting student will bring a gift for his/her American host family. The gift should be accepted with gratitude and can often serve as a conversation starter.

It is also customary for the host family to give a gift to the visiting student to remember his/her stay in Cincinnati. Gift ideas include the following:

- A photo album consisting of pictures taken during his/her stay in Cincinnati.
- Postcards of places of interest in Cincinnati that you may have visited, e.g., Fountain Square, Eden Park, Zoo, etc.
- Local food, e.g., Aglamesis candy, Skyline Chili mix
- Team t-shirts or hats from the Reds, Bengals, FC Cincinnati, XU or UC
- Nativity sweatshirt
- Picture book of landmarks in Cincinnati

Homesickness

It is not uncommon for visiting students to feel a bit homesick the first several days. For some if not most it is their first trip abroad. They are staying with families they do not know, living in a city where they do not have complete command of the language, eating foods that may seem strange or different.

Once the visiting student experiences the American hospitality and realizes that he/she won't starve, they begin to settle in. Within a couple of days the student generally feels comfortable, and by the end of the visit he/she wants to stay longer.

The first couple of days are the challenging ones. The temptation will be to have the student call home to be reassured by his/her parents. That tactic often increases the chances that the student will not adjust as quickly.

The visiting student's chaperones are the first resources. If the visiting student seems to be extraordinarily homesick, the host parent should call the chaperones that can then intervene. Try to leave calling the student's parents as a final solution.

Injury / Medical Emergency / Sickness

Contact the visiting chaperone immediately if the visiting student becomes sick or injured. The second call should go to the Nativity administrative staff. They will consult with the visiting chaperone and make a decision about appropriate treatment.

Spending Money & Shopping

Students arrive with money they have saved and/or their parents have provided for them to purchase souvenirs or gifts to take home. Nativity cannot control the amount of money each student brings. For some students, a visit to America is a rare opportunity to purchase a variety of consumer goods that are not readily available or that are very expensive in their country. It may seem like they are focused on shopping.

The host parents, no doubt, can understand the sense of urgency on the part of the visiting student. It is helpful if the hosting parent outlines the activities for the week and lets their guest know when there will be an opportunity to go shopping. By asking the visiting student just what it is he/she is looking for, the host parent can guide the student to the appropriate store.

School Life at Nativity

Students from Nativity who are hosting a student from abroad still have academic obligations they are expected to fill. A quiet evening at home so the American student can do homework is appropriate. That gives the visiting student time to email home, write in a journal, play board games with younger host family members, etc.

Resources You Can Use

- Visiting Chaperones
See visiting delegation roster for names and phone numbers
- Other Host Families
Nativity families who are also hosting a student from the same country. See the visiting delegation roster for names and phone numbers.
- Nativity families who are familiar with the dynamics of hosting.
Contact the office for names and phone numbers.

The most important thing to remember is that you are not in this alone. You have multiple resources to call upon to help make this experience the best for your family. That is Nativity. That is the Friendship Journey. That's what we do!

Jungle Jim's

Route 4 in Fairfield
Foods from around the world

Asia Market

Reading Road at Glendale Milford Road in
Evedale
Food from Asian countries

These are great places to take your visiting student to find some "comfort food" to ease the transition to American cuisine.

© 2023 Nativity School
All rights reserved.