

# DAYTON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM



# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM PARENT/STUDENT/HOST FAMILY HANDBOOK

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**INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM  
PARENT/STUDENT/HOST FAMILY HANDBOOK**

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# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM

## PARENT/STUDENT/HOST FAMILY HANDBOOK

### INTRODUCTION

Each year Dayton Christian School System (DCSS) enrolls several international students who have been referred to us by someone on our staff, an agency, another student or family. We are delighted that you are one of those who have been selected to spend a year in our school.

For most people, to live in a foreign country and study its culture, to know its people and to come to understand its way of life is a dream that is never realized. We at DCSS are pleased to offer you this opportunity. We welcome you to DCSS where you will study, and also to the family with whom you will live and to the city of Dayton, Ohio. We invite you to learn more about the American way of life, the people, and hopefully about yourself.

This Student Handbook was developed to help prepare you for your cultural exchange experience. Take time to read it all the way through and refer to it throughout the year. We hope you will find it insightful and that it will give you a clearer understanding of what to expect.

Some students will adjust to the new culture in the United States more easily than others. Here are some of the special qualities that are necessary to make your stay a successful one.

- **Realistic Expectations:** Do you have a realistic understanding of Americans, or do you “know” all about Americans from T.V. and movies?
- **Sense of Humor:** Are you able to laugh at yourself when you fail or get angry?
- **Ability to Communicate:** Do you talk about your feelings to someone? Can you tell your host family or your DCSS Representative when you feel lonely, homesick, discouraged or unwelcome?
- **Open-minded; Tolerant of differences; Non-judgmental:** Do you talk about your host family behind their back? Are you critical of the way they do things? Or do you accept that your host family is different from your own family and they do things differently? Do you try to understand things before you criticize and complain?
- **Ability to Succeed:** Do you get depressed when you have difficulty in your English class? Do you withdraw from people when you feel you can’t communicate or make friends? Or do you laugh at yourself and keep on going?
- **Flexibility; Adaptability:** Are you willing to change your old habits in order to adjust to your host family? Or are you stubborn and unwilling to change and adapt to your new environment?
- **Strong sense of Self:** Are you confident in your abilities and character? Are you able to admit your weaknesses and mistakes? Do you listen when someone criticizes and discipline your behavior? Or do you get defensive and refuse to change?

We believe the three most important qualities you can have as an exchange student are:

1. Sense of Humor
2. Flexibility; adaptability
3. Ability to communicate

A sense of humor is important because there will be times when you will feel homesick, lonely, angry, embarrassed, annoyed, discouraged or unwelcome. The ability to laugh at yourself and your situation may be your only defense against depression. We suggest you give yourself three minutes to feel “down,” then pick yourself up, laugh and keep going.

To be a flexible and adaptable person is critical. Learning to live in the United States is like playing a game you’ve never played before and for which the rules haven’t been explained very well. The challenge is to enjoy the game without missing too many plays, learning the rules and developing skills as you go along. This requires flexibility to adjust your way of thinking and doing things to fit in with the American way of life. Not everything will be as you expected. It will be your responsibility to adapt to your American host family, not their responsibility to adapt to you.

When you have a problem with your host family, you need to talk to them about it. It’s the most important thing you can do. You must communicate with your host family. The ability to communicate, whether or not you speak fluent English, is essential if you want to succeed as an exchange student. Why? Because you are living with a new family already accustomed to communicating with one another. Their way of interacting with one another may be very different from your own family back home. You will need to “catch up” and learn what is expected of you, quickly.

## CYCLE OF ADJUSTMENT

Your year in the United States is not going to be easy. You will have some frustrating and discouraging days, and will be expected to act like a mature teenager. You may find yourself totally overwhelmed among native English speakers at first, or you may simply be confused by particular words or phrases. At times, you may wish to return home because you miss your friends and family so much.

All of these feelings and emotions are symptoms of “culture shock.” Culture shock is a normal part of living in a new country. Students experience culture shock to varying degrees and for varying length of time, but all will experience it at some time during their home stay in the U.S.

Culture shock comes from the experience of living in another culture where that country’s values, perception, cultural norms and beliefs “threaten” your understanding of what you thought to be “right.”

Language difficulty is one of the biggest contributing factors to culture shock. You may appear quiet or disinterested to your host family, when you are really just too tied to concentrate

or talk. Your host family may find it difficult to understand the kind of concentration and effort required of you to speak in English all of the time. You may feel frustrated with your inability to express complete ideas or feelings. Because you are forced to communicate on a simple level, you may feel like a “child.”

You will go through various stages of adjustment as you progress through the year. Being aware of these phases will help you and your host family to better understand each other and enable you to keep your sense of humor as the year progresses.

During Phase I everything is interesting. You have just arrived and are the center of attention. Anything new is intriguing and exciting. You may be aware of similarities between your culture and the American culture more than anything else.

By Phase II, however, the honeymoon is over. This is the stage in which “culture shock” happens. Your focus shifts to differences rather than similarities. Some people call this the “Isn’t America Stupid” stage. The following is a list of some of the symptoms observed in severe cases of culture shock:

- Homesickness
- Boredom and lack of energy
- Withdrawal from interaction with host family and American friends
- Need for excessive amounts of sleep
- Compulsive eating or loss of hunger
- Irritability
- Exaggerated cleanliness
- Family tension and conflict
- Chauvinistic excesses
- Stereotyping of and hostility toward Americans
- Inability to work effectively in school
- Feeling emotions and overwhelmed
- Physical ailments such as stomachaches or headaches

Most students will not experience severe culture shock. However, you may find yourself sleeping a lot or staying in your room for hours at a time. Or perhaps you find that you’ve become irritable and won’t do what you’re asked to do. These are symptoms of Phase II.

At Phase III, you are on the road to recovery. This is the stage in which you begin to feel more comfortable in your new environment. What was once “threatening” and unknown has now become acceptable and familiar.

By Phase IV, you’re well adjusted to your American surroundings! You have learned to function in this new culture with confidence. You may actually now enjoy and appreciate things you were highly critical of during Phase II. You may not want to return home. There is even a chance that you may experience “reverse culture shock” when you get home.

The better you understand yourself and your culture, the more tolerant and flexible you will be in adjusting to a different culture. We believe that every culture has positive and negative aspects. We encourage you to study and to be aware of the differences between your country

and America. Try to understand the differences before you judge them. For example, many exchange students, after living in the U.S. for a while, become very critical and will express their criticisms openly. “All Americans are stupid.” “In my country, we do things better.” “Why should I study? American schools are so easy; I studied these courses two years ago.” Sometimes the observations exchange students make about America are accurate; sometimes they are not. Your American host family and classmates may resent your criticism and will begin to avoid you if complaining persists. Remember, you came to the U.S. not to judge and criticize, but to learn about the American culture and language. You must keep an open mind and remember that your own culture has positive and negative points too.

## AMERICAN VALUES

Americans are as different from each other, culturally, as they are different from foreigners. Americans are made up of Italian-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Japanese-Americans, African-Americans, Scandinavian-Americans; a variety of backgrounds and customs contribute to and influence American culture. Most countries don't have the “melting pot” of nationalities that the United States has.

The United States is only a little over 200 years old. Our culture and values are still being shaped and defined as more and more people come to the United States to live and raise their children. In fact, 99 percent of the present population in the U.S. are descendants of immigrants. This leads us to ask some key questions. Is there a typical American culture? What is American culture? What do Americans value? The answers to these questions vary from East to West and North to South. Some of the values that begin to define American culture include: cleanliness, timeliness, practicality, responsibility, high motivation, assertiveness, health-consciousness, conservatism, preparation for the future, physical appearance, work ethic, privacy, good sportsmanship, originality, and diplomacy. Of course this is not a generalization about all Americans, but it will give you some idea of the values many Americans share.

For example, if you come from a culture that does not emphasize timeliness or “being on time,” you will discover Americans are preoccupied with “being on time” and you may find the American lifestyle stressful. For example, if your host mother tells you to be home by 11:00pm on a Friday night, you should be home by 11:00pm sharp! If you are going to be late for some reason, call your host mother and explain where you are and why you will be late in coming home. Do not be found insensitive by your host mother. It is your responsibility to adjust yourself to your host family and learn what is important to them.

Many visitors to the U.S. feel immediately welcomed by friendly, informal Americans they meet. Casual acquaintances, even store clerks or waitresses, will greet them with a warm “hello” or “how are you?”. When many of these relationships fail to progress past this initial stage, visitors often refer to this behavior as “superficial” friendliness. It is difficult for some visitors to the U.S. to understand that these greetings simply represent the American values of friendliness, politeness, informality, and egalitarianism.

Understanding American culture will help you to better understand your own culture by challenging you to think about your values and beliefs and where they originate. You will

become “culturally sensitive” to other people and other ways of life. You will learn to see things from a different perspective. One of the best ways to see one’s own culture is through the eyes of an outsider.

## YOUR ROLE AS A DCSS EXCHANGE STUDENT

Your home stay experience in the U.S. can bring endless new insights. It involves change, questioning and sometimes frustration. Open-mindedness, sensitivity and respect are necessary for a successful experience.

It is important to remember that as a foreigner in America you will not understand or approve of everything you see. There is a natural tendency to feel that one’s own customs, beliefs, and values are the best. However, accepting that “different” does not necessarily mean “better” or “worse” and withholding value judgments will create an environment of mutual respect that will allow for greater understanding between you and your American host family and friends.

You will be expected to adjust to your host family and to respect their requests of you. You will be expected to behave in ways that may seem to be sacrifices and compromises. You will be expected to act maturely and responsibly. You are not coming to the United States just to “have a good time and goof off for a year.” Instead, you are coming to live with a family to learn about them and their community. What you do and say will positively or negatively affect your relationship with your host family. This doesn’t mean you can’t be yourself and have fun. You can “be yourself” and have responsible fun. Responsible fun means thinking before doing. It means not being selfish. It means acting responsibly, even when you may be tempted by friends or situations to act otherwise.

As you and your new “family” become acquainted with one another, misunderstandings and miscommunication are a normal part of the adjustment process. We’ve outlined the most common sources of frustration, resentment and misunderstanding. Read through this information carefully.

Your family may have a structured schedule, especially if there are children or teenagers in the home. Watch and observe the family members to learn how the house is run. If you are used to sleeping in late on Saturday mornings, but notice that the entire family is up at 8:00a.m., think about how your family may react. Your family may think you are lazy, or they may think you don’t want to be a part of the family’s weekend activities. Talk to your host family about your personal habits and see if there are any habits you may need to sacrifice or change for the sake of fitting into your host family’s schedule and life-style.

Keep in mind that Americans love to celebrate holidays. A card or small gift on a family member’s birthday or at Christmas time will be greatly appreciated.

As a member of the family, you are expected to share equally in the chores and duties of your home. Your host parents should treat you as they do their own children. You are not a

guest in the sense that you have no responsibilities. You have been welcomed into your host family's home and must respect their rules as you would respect those of your natural parents. Show your host parents how much you appreciate all they are doing for you. Everyone loves to be recognized and appreciated. Say thank you often!

Many American families have two working parents, which means you will most likely be responsible for washing your own clothes. Discuss a laundry schedule with your host family and ask them to show you how to use their washing machine and dryer.

Americans are concerned about cleanliness. Most Americans bathe or shower at least once a day. Overseas, bathing customs differ. Many Europeans, for example, do not bathe as often as Americans do. If you do not bathe more than three or four times a week, your host family and friends may become offended by your body odor. The same applies to washing and changing clothes. Americans change their outfits daily and usually wash clothes after each wearing. Be sensitive about how you look and smell. Appearance is very important to Americans. Students at school may avoid or tease you if you neglect your personal hygiene.

As a DCSS international student, you are expected to do your best in school. Your host family and DCSS representative will expect you to make a sincere effort in your classes and study diligently. Manage your time so that you aren't studying late into the night. Your host parents will worry about you if you work too hard, and they will complain if you work too little. Remember, this is an academic program, but it is also a home stay and cultural exchange program. Balance your time between studying for school and spending time with your host family and friends.

Most American families set fairly strict rules for their own children. If you are used to a great deal of independence and freedom in your home country, be prepared to change your lifestyle. Your host family will most likely have a curfew time when they expect you home and may or may not allow you to go out with friends every weekend. If you want to go somewhere, always ask your host parents for permission. If you are late or your plans have changed, call your host parents and explain your situation. Remember, you are not in your own country or home and must respect your host family's rules and requests.

In the United States, dating among teens is common. It is common for boys and girls to go out without an escort. However, there are occasions at DCSS, like Junior Senior Banquet, where finding a date consumes a lot of time and energy. It can be an exciting time for exchange students and we ask that you behave responsibly and maturely. If you find yourself involved in a special relationship there are certain things you must keep in mind.

DCSS host families will not tolerate their exchange students being sexually active. American parents are much more strict about this than their European counterparts. Even if you have been sexually active in your own country, you must refrain from sexual activity while living in the U.S. DCSS parents will not tolerate sexual activity among their own children and will expect the same of their exchange student. This is a part of respecting the values of your American hosts.

There is also concern in the U.S. of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. AIDS has reached an epidemic proportion in this country. It is simply not safe for teenagers in this country to be sexually active. If your host parents show concern with a relationship you are

having, you must realize that it is not only a matter of cultural values. It is an awareness of the very real health concerns that face Americans today.

When you first arrive in this community and at DCSS you may find that there are many people that are eager to meet you. They are fascinated by your accent and want to know all about your country. You may begin to think that you have made many new friends. As the weeks and months progress, you may find that people do not seem as interested and friendly as they were at first. You may begin to feel that maybe all people cared about was the novelty of your accent.

Don't be discouraged. As a culture, Americans tend to be very friendly and open at first. This friendliness does not usually turn into fast friendships. For many exchange students, this can be the most difficult part of their stay in the United States. They begin to feel that other students don't like them because they aren't being invited to parties or after-school events. Exchange students are often confused by the "See you later" or "Call you later" from American students who don't call or come over. Remember that entering into any group as a newcomer is difficult and will take patience and effort on your part.

There will probably be other exchange students at DCSS and you will be tempted to "hang out" with them. They may relate better to your experience than most American students, but the best way to experience American culture is with American friends. Most exchange students don't make American friends until the second half of the year, but don't give up! If there are people that you are interested in spending time with, don't wait for them to ask you to socialize. Ask them first!

Joining school activities is a good way to make friends. With the permission of your host family, have a few friends over for dinner. If there are Americans interested in studying in your home country, host a get together to exchange information. Start a study exchange with a student learning your language. The most important thing is to be yourself and not to worry! Remember that even Americans face the same challenges when making lasting friendships.

This is a distinctly Christian School and therefore it is required of each family to attend church weekly. You will have a Bible class that will require you to turn in sermon notes weekly. Many American families are religious but more importantly they have a personal relationship with God. Many ethical and moral standards in America spring from religious beliefs. The back of all our coins is imprinted with the words, "In God We Trust" and in our pledge to the flag we call ourselves "One Nation, Under God." The religious makeup of the country is varied, but you will be in a distinctly Christian home.

Depending on your country of origin, you may not understand the value that your host family places on their religious activities. Church and religion play a central part in numerous households. You may think that their practices are "silly" or you may disagree with their beliefs. You will need to remain open-minded and not be too quick to judge. You are required to go to church with your host family. It is okay for you to talk to your host family about our feelings in this area, but be prepared to go to church with them anyway.

In many communities the church is a center for social activities. It can provide lively entertainment in the form of outings, musical groups, and informal get-togethers. Even if you have differing beliefs from your host family, participation in church activities is an excellent way of getting to know the American culture. It can also be a good way of making friends. Participation in church activities shows your host family that you are willing to become a part of the larger community. The more time you spend with you host family respecting their beliefs and lifestyle, the more you will gain from the home stay experience.

Here are a few questions to ask to help you discover more about religion in your community.

1. What Christian church affiliation is your host family?
2. In what ways is it similar to or different than your own?
3. Ask a member of your host family about their denomination/church affiliation. What do they believe?

You are expected to pay for you own personal expenses such as clothes, school lunches, long distance telephone calls, school related expenses and personal entertainment. Talk about your financial responsibilities with your host parents when you arrive. Money is always a sensitive issue, especially for Americans who are raised to believe that money is hard earned. If you fail to pay for those things which are your responsibility, your host family may start to resent you and may be less willing to do things for you. Be responsible about money and don't let your expenses go unpaid!

Your DCSS Representative serves as a liaison in all aspects of the exchange program at Dayton Christian School System. In addition to placing you with a host family, conducting an orientation and helping you to enroll in the high school, the DCSS. Representative also provides you and your host family with assistance and counseling when necessary. The DCSS Representative is available to aid in emergencies.

Your DCSS Representative is available if you need someone to talk to. If you have a question or a problem, and feel uncomfortable talking to your host parents, don't hesitate to call you DCSS Representative. He or she cannot help you if you do not express that help is needed. You should also pick up the phone and call to say hello from time to time.

Dayton Christian School System tells the DCSS Representative to keep in touch with you about once a month. Several times a year, the DCSS Representative will complete a Student Progress Report evaluating your progress with your host family and in school. In addition to positive comments, the DCSS Representative reports if you have had adjustment problems with your host family or at school. A copy of this report is shared with you and your natural parents.

If you are having problems, your DCSS Representative will talk with you about the situation and help you and your host family to find a solution. It is important to remember that your actions and words will have a strong impact on your host family, friends and teachers. You are an ambassador for your country. Your responsible behavior gains the respect and trust of those around you. It also makes it possible for future DCSS exchange students to have positive exchange experiences in this school.

## USEFUL INFORMATION

### Common Academic Mistakes to Avoid

1. **Cramming:** Don't wait till the last minute to study for a test or quiz. Use your time wisely and prepare a bit each day by reviewing material and going over homework.
2. **Not Listening in Class:** Interactive listening is important. Even though your English language skills may need improvement, don't tune out in class because it's hard to listen and comprehend.
3. **Going to Class Unprepared:** Do your homework and take necessary materials to class. Late work will often be penalized and being unprepared can cause you to fall behind.
4. **Failing to Participate in Class:** Involvement in class will help you retain material covered in class.
5. **Failing to Ask for Help:** Don't wait to ask for help or to seek for clarification from the teacher. Keep your host family informed. Your host family can help bring the right resources together to help you.
6. **Failing to stay organized:** Be aware of upcoming tasks, prioritize them. Generally it helps to tackle the hardest first.

### Transportation

1. Public transportation in the U.S. will very likely be quite a bit different than in your home country. Generally, you will not find public transportation like trains and busses as common or readily available.
2. In your home country the automobiles may drive on the opposite side of the road than they do in the U. S. If that is the case, be careful stepping off of the curb to cross a street because you may step into the path of a car!
3. As a pedestrian you are required to yield to vehicles unless you are in a pedestrian crosswalk. Obey crossing signs, and don't cross diagonally at intersections.
4. Bicycles must obey the same traffic laws as vehicles. Don't leave a bicycle unattended, lock it up.

### Money

1. The U.S. monetary system is decimal based, with 100 cents equaling one dollar.
2. Your host family will help you become familiar with the currency system and also provide you with help on what is a "good deal" when shopping.
3. Your host family will also help you set up a checking account at a local bank if you feel that is necessary.
4. Your host family will also be willing to provide you with tips on handling your money and keeping your financial matters safe.
5. Watch your budget. If you have a checking account, keep your check register up to date.

## **Health and Emergencies**

1. In the Dayton area the EMERGENCY phone number to call for fire, police and medical emergencies is **911**. When you call this number an operator will answer you and ask you some questions about the nature of your emergency and where you are located. Do not hang up until the operator says it is OK to do so.
2. Have your host family review their emergency plans for their home: have them show you the smoke alarms; where they evacuate to in case of a fire alarm; where the storm shelters are in the home; where other important phone numbers are kept.
3. Obey the safety rules of your host family.
4. Avoid the temptation to do and try everything. Get enough rest and eat healthy. Your diet will probably require some adjusting in the best of circumstances. Don't complicate it by poor health habits.
5. Make your host family aware of any special health concerns like allergies.

## **English Language Requirement**

1. Students are required to be able to speak, read and write English. An international student's ability to be successful at DCSS depends upon their ability to communicate in the English language. Each international student may be interviewed in the orientation process and the amount of English training that will be required of him/her will be decided by the orientation committee. Students should acquire as much English language experience as possible prior to attending school in the United States. Failing to accurately represent English proficiency could result in dismissal from the program.
2. Students are **required** to take the Secondary Level English Proficiency (SLEP) test and provide scores prior to admission. The SLEP scores will be used as part of the decision for admission. International students must be prepared to retain the services of an English tutor if their academic performance is being adversely affected by a lack of English language proficiency. DCSS does not currently offer any English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. DCSS retains the option to have students to retake the SLEP test after arrival. If scores are not satisfactory the student may be asked to withdraw from the school and return home.

Guidelines for SLEP scores:

Applicants for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade: minimum composite score of 50

Applicants for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade: minimum composite score of 55

## DAYTON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM INTERNATIONAL STUDENT REQUIREMENTS

By signing the Student Application, you accepted the responsibility to adhere to Dayton Christian School System International Student rules and regulations. Unfortunately, students will be dismissed from the DCSS International Student Program if they fail to comply with our standards. We hope this reminder helps you to avoid problems that will keep you from having a successful year.

- You must possess a minimum overall academic record of a “C” average
- You must declare in your application whether or not you are taking courses for academic credit or for the cultural experience.
- You agree to attend and succeed academically in a Christian high school.
- You regularly attend a Christian church with your host family.
- You exhibit maturity, flexibility, and adaptability.
- Start at the beginning of the school year and accept the host family and high school placement recommended by the International Students Committee.
- You must be between the ages of 15-18 upon arrival in Ohio.
- You must demonstrate good English language capability to the satisfaction of the International Students Committee
  - A minimum combined SLEP score of 50 or above is required for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. A minimum combined score of 55 is required for grades 11 and 12.
  - Students may be required to submit a recording of their English language ability or take part in an interview.
- You must receive and provide documentation for all necessary immunizations prior to enrollment in the high school.
  - Immunization records must be translated into English and be received by the school on appropriate immunization forms.
  - Failure to provide documentation of immunizations could result in denial of admittance to the program.
- You must demonstrate an ability to pay all tuition and necessary fees. When fees are paid by wire transfer you must also send an e-mail to the International Student Director and the DCSS Business Office indicating the student’s name and the amount paid.
- You must provide proof of medical insurance for your stay in the U.S.
- You must comply with and maintain DCSS standards for moral behavior as stated in the DCSS Parent Student Handbook.
- You must provide **official transcripts translated into English** for all school work done at other schools if you desire to be considered for a diploma from DCSS.
  - Students should not expect to attend DCSS for just their Senior year and receive a high school diploma from DCSS
- You must meet all State of Ohio graduation requirements if you desire a high school diploma.
- You are accepted for **one** year at a time and must express in writing to the International Students Director your desire to return for an additional year.

The International Student Application (complete with official translated transcripts, medical examination, medical history, immunization record, program rules and personal background information) is reviewed for acceptance by the International Student Committee. Accepted applications are then sent to the prospective high school. The Principal will evaluate the applications and provide input to the Director concerning acceptance.

## DAYTON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RULES

### Rule #1: Host Family Regulations

Your host family has volunteered to open their home to you. Their lifestyle and expectations for you as a member of their family may be very different from what you experience at home. It is extremely important that you are respectful of their rules while living in their home. Students may not break host family regulations regarding curfew, smoking, drinking, dating or household chores for which you are responsible. They may not have guests in the host family's home without their permission. Repeated problems and poor reports from your DCSS Representative may result in your dismissal from the program. Remember: Your host family is your most vital link to the cross-cultural experience. By becoming a part of their lives you truly become a part of the American experience. Here are some rules you can expect to find in the average household:

1. Most host families will assign household duties like taking out the garbage, walking the dog, cleaning your room, or doing laundry.
2. You may be expected to introduce your new friends to your host family and to request permission to have guests to the home.
3. You will probably have a curfew that you will be expected to follow.
4. You will be required to inform your family where you are going, with whom and when you will return.
5. You will be required to show respect to all family members and for their personal belongings.
6. You will be expected to comply with the host family's rules concerning computer and internet use.

### Rule #2: Academic Life

DCSS Exchange Students are required to attend school and achieve satisfactory grades. They must follow all attendance requirements at the high school. Students who are expelled from high school due to poor behavior or low grades will be dismissed from the program. As a DCSS Exchange Student you are expected to participate as a full time student in the regular program in the high school. You are expected to follow the same course requirements as your American counterpart.

**As an exchange student it is vital when you enroll that you declare whether or not you intend to pursue a diploma from one of the DCSS schools. Your academic program will be determined by whether or not you intend to earn a diploma.** If you are seeking a

diploma and do not make satisfactory academic progress and maintain satisfactory grades you may be dismissed from the program or have to repeat a grade. If you are not seeking a diploma but are still seeking academic credit for the courses you take you must advise the school principal as soon as possible. **In order to receive a diploma from DCSS you must meet all State of Ohio graduation requirements including passing all required graduation tests and credit requirements as well as DCSS requirements.**

We encourage you to participate in the full range of sports, clubs and activities that are available at your high school. Although we encourage participation in sports, **international/exchange students are not permitted to take part in interscholastic competition** in our sports program. You may practice with the team if the coach permits and you meet all other criteria. In no case will you be permitted to compete against another team. To most students, extracurricular involvement has been an important part of the DCSS Exchange Student experience. The more active you are in school life, the more rapid and smooth your adjustment to your new environment will be.

It is common to study together with other students to prepare for exams and to work together on projects. However, all work that is individual work must be your own original work. Cheating during a test or plagiarizing a paper will result in academic and discipline consequences that could jeopardize your status at school. Pressure to succeed and cultural differences can lead to poor choices while you are a part of the American academic experience. You are encouraged to draw upon the expertise and experiences of others while at the same time working and thinking independently. Talk with one of your teachers if there are any questions on how you should proceed on a particular task.

### Rule #3: Local, State and National Laws

While in the United States, students are under the authority of national, state and local laws. They are also under the authority of their school's regulations. It is important that they obey all laws.

### Rule #4: Drugs

The use of non-prescription drugs is illegal for everyone in the United States. Therefore, students may use only drugs prescribed by their doctor (or over the counter items such as aspirin). Involvement with drugs during the DCSS International Student Program is grounds for dismissal. Dayton Christian School System reserves the right to make a final determination regarding dismissal from the program if drug usage is suspected.

### Rule #5: Drinking

Students **may not** drink or purchase alcoholic beverages (this includes beer and wine). The minimum drinking age in the United States is 21 years. Stiff fines, arrest, and imprisonment can result for those found violating this law. This will be a major change for many of you that are accustomed to the use of alcohol in your own cultures. It is important to abide by this rule as you make the transition into American culture and your host family's life.

## A Note About Drinking and Drugs:

You may find that in your community there are other students that drink and use drugs. They may try to get you to participate to prove that you fit in socially. This is what we call “peer pressure”. Perhaps, you are feeling homesick or bored. Both are signs of culture shock. The temptation to try something new or to drink may be a way of dealing with these feelings. In either case, it is important to communicate what is going on to your host family or DCSS Representative.

### Rule #6: Driving

DCSS International Students may not drive motorized vehicles. DCSS International Students are not allowed to purchase or own any motor vehicle.

### Rule #7: Travel

Students may not travel independently or hitchhike. They may not travel while school is in session without the written permission of their school principal. Any travel that a student undertakes should only occur during school vacation time after the Christmas holiday. If students plan to travel, they must be accompanied by a responsible adult (25 years or older) and have written permission from the DCSS Representative.

The holiday season is a very special time for many host families and they would like to share their American traditions with you. Plan to participate in your host family’s holiday celebrations, including gift giving.

If you travel to Mexico or Canada with your host family or on an overseas mission trip and plan to re-enter the U.S. during your program, you must carry the following items:

- Passport
- I-94 white admission card (attached inside of your passport)
- IAP-66 pink, visa application form

Upon re-entry into the U.S., the I-94 white admission card will be replaced with a new I-94.

### Rule #8: Visits from Friends and Family

DCSS finds visits from natural parents and friends from the student’s home country extremely detrimental to the student’s adjustment process and therefore strongly discourages this kind of contact. Family and friends from the student’s home country may not visit the student in the U.S. for the first six months of the program. In the case of semester students, family and friends may not visit until the last month of the student’s program. Any travel that a student undertakes with their natural parents may only occur after the Christmas holiday; preferably, this kind of travel should only occur at the end of the program.

### Rule #9: Returning Home

Dayton Christian School System International students are expected to return to their home countries within two weeks after the school ending date, but no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>.

DCSS, the host family and the DCSS Representative will not be responsible for students after the end of the program on June 30<sup>th</sup>.

## Host Family

### What Is a Host Family?

The DCSS International Student Program Host Family provides a caring "home away from home" experience for students from other countries who are enrolled in DCSS. American Christian families "adopt" international students to learn from them and to love them as sojourners in our land. Host families seek, by their caring lifestyle, conversation and prayers, to demonstrate biblical Christianity to these student(s) so that each might return to his or her country as a maturing follower of Jesus - a missionary already trained in language and culture. Think of this as you consider the "cost" of being a host family. You are helping equip a missionary to return to their own country.

The International Students Director interviews and screens each international host family. Parts of this process can be accomplished by phone. Families are selected on the basis of their capacity to provide a suitable environment for the student. Both parents in the host family must be born-again Christians. They must be financially stable, English must be the primary language in the home and each member of the family should agree to the decision to host an international student. A "rule of thumb" in selecting a host family is whether or not the Director would place his/her own child with that family.

Host families come from all walks of life and they all have a desire to share their lives with an international student. They are two parent families with a solid Christian testimony. They may or may not have children in the family, but if they have children their children should be attending a Christian school.

The host family must fill out an ***International Student Host Family Application*** in order to host a student. In some cases the family may have been contacted by an agency that places international students and not by DCSS. They are still required to be accepted by our application process in order for the student to attend DCSS. By hosting an international student under the DCSS program the family is committing to regular church attendance and to helping the student in the DCSS scripture memorization program.

All host families are volunteers. In agreeing to host an International Student, the host family assumes financial responsibility for providing room and board for the student and for including the student in any and all family activities. Students pay for their own entertainment, school related costs, and personal expenses. In some circumstances a stipend may be available from the student's family.

A host family's agreement is to host the student for one school year, from August to the end of school. By mutual agreement the student's stay may be extended. A student's conduct could impact this decision.

Host families are expected to provide transportation to school and to International Student activities that are designed to enhance the overall experience of the student. Such activities include field trips, holiday festivities, and sporting events.

Host families are expected to interface with the school to ensure the student is making adequate and appropriate academic progress. Communication with the teachers, counselors and principal are necessary to provide the best possible experience for the student.

It is likely that in the course of having a new person in the home that disagreements may arise. The family and student should first seek to settle the matter between themselves biblically. If the matter can't be resolved then the matter should be brought to the International Students' Director for assistance.

### **Practical Suggestions for the Host Family**

1. Help the student to become familiar with the "American way of life" such as vending machines, laundromats, supermarkets, checking accounts, the Post Office and other similar customs. For many students this will be familiar, others may find it a big change.
2. Introduce the student gradually to the community. If possible, it may be a good idea to invite the student to observe or participate in civic or professional activities in which the host family is involved. If you do not have a student the same or similar age as your international student be discerning in taking them to youth activities at your church where they could possibly feel isolated. Hopefully there will be another DCSS student in your church who can help with the transition.
3. Familiarize the student with American social customs and manners. Help in the acquisition of practical idiomatic English as spoken in the United States. Provide information into aspects of community living which interests the student most, such as government, business, education, the arts and recreation. You could introduce them to Americans working in the area of the vocation or ministry they are interested in..
4. Holidays can be a lonesome time for students. Help the student plan for these periods. Be sensitive to the student's own country's holidays and festivals.
5. The basic guideline is to do the things your family normally does. Make sure your extended family knows about your plans to host a student. Help the extended family prepare also. The extended family, especially if they are Christian, can add immeasurably to the international student's experience.

### **Hospitality Hints**

You may wonder what to do when the international student arrives at your home. Here are some helpful preparations you can make:

1. Learn something about their country, culture and customs before their visit. Seek to know them. You may get more information from your local library or from an encyclopedia.
2. Different cultures have different views of time. Do *not* be surprised! Regardless of the student's view of time, they need to respect and obey your family curfews.
3. Welcome them with warmth and friendship. Learn to pronounce their real name. Practice pronouncing their name with them until you can say it reasonably well.
4. Speak distinctly but not loudly. It is more helpful to pause between sentences than to speak each word slowly. Try to avoid use of slang. Ask them to repeat anything you do not understand. Encourage your friends to ask you to do the same. It may take some time but the investment will pay dividends in the long run.
5. Have a simple dinner but have plenty of food. Respect dietary restrictions.
6. Help the student(s) feel at home. Be natural and informal. Find mutual interests or hobbies. Treat them as part of the family. Explain new things to them. Show them around your home but don't brag. Share photographs. If you have a yearbook of the campus your student will be attending use it as a means to help break the ice with them before school starts.
7. Show real interest in the international students. Get them to talk about themselves. Ask about family, education, religious background, home life, culture, customs, food likes and dislikes, aspirations, activities and plans. Learn greetings in their language. Give them time to answer, and encourage them to ask questions about you as well. If you have family out of state use a map to help them visualize where your family is. Ask them to show you their home area on a map.
8. Be interested in the problems of international students. Most are much more willing to talk about politics or religion than are Americans, but remember: discuss, but don't argue. And don't pry if they seem hesitant. Use natural avenues into these discussions like Bible class or term paper projects to launch discussions.
9. You may not always understand or agree with your international student, but you should be willing to accept him or her and their perspectives, while avoiding, as much as possible, making value judgments of "right and wrong" or "better and worse" between aspects of their culture and yours. Recognize these as simply "different". However, this is a great opportunity for you to ascertain why you believe what you believe. Is it convenience or conviction?

### **Your Guest at the Dining Table**

Naturally, the Host Family will be providing meals for the student; however, there are certain things to remember in planning and preparing a meal.

The meal should be served in a relaxed and unhurried atmosphere. Most Internationals are unaccustomed to the way Americans quickly devour their food. In some countries it is not the custom to talk while eating, so don't take your guest's silence as a mark of uneasiness or

ungratefulness. In some cultures it is considered impolite to accept a second serving until it has been offered several times. So be careful to discern whether the guest does not care for any more of the American-type food or if she or he has had enough to eat. When in doubt, offer at least three times.

Remember, your guest may have some dietary restrictions because of religious or cultural background. Try to ascertain some of these restrictions prior to arrival, and plan your meal accordingly. If this is not possible, include ample amounts of vegetables in your meal just in case the visitor is a vegetarian. Hopefully these details will be known in advance. It is always appropriate to ask.

## **Encouragement**

When your international student thinks back about their first visit to your home, it is likely that the student will not be too concerned about your dishes or home or knowledge. The attitudes which prevailed in the home, the warmth of friendship, your deep concern for their well-being, and your interest in their country will be remembered. These attitudes can exist in an exclusive suburban home, humble apartment, or farmhouse. You are the one that makes the difference in this situation. Hopefully the student will also remember the presence in the family of a intimate personal relationship with Christ; one that crosses cultural boundaries.

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## **Why Be a Host Family?**

Next to getting an education, the greatest desire of most internationals is to make one close American friend. Making friends with the student will not happen automatically but it is one of the reasons we have an international student program at DCSS.

There are a number of reasons why being a host family can be the most complete way of serving internationals as God's Good News calls us to. First, most internationals, before coming to the U.S., have lived in the same community and home, surrounded by their extended family all their lives. When they come here to study, they face alone the difficulties of new language, culture, food, values and academic pressures, with neither the encouragement and help nor the accountability and discipline that a local extended family provides. Your role as a host family

will help meet those needs. Your church is important in this process too. Think of the opportunity you have to model the Christian life and involvement in service at church. Our aim is that the international student will see the church in America in action and not just a place where American families go on Sunday morning.

Second, students get homesick. They miss the presence of parents, grandparents, siblings and little children. They miss the comforts and pleasures of a family and of a home-cooked meal.

Third, research shows that **the** most important resource for the adaptation of internationals to the U.S. is an American friend or family. The most critical period is the first three months after their arrival. It has been compared to the bonding of a baby to its parents in the first couple of hours after birth, when it has a greatly heightened awareness and acceptance of its surroundings. If such a relationship is not established with Americans in the first three months or year of a student's arrival, they will develop or find an ethnic or international sub-cultural group, because they did not find an American friend when they needed one. Once this happens, whether naturally or by necessity, the felt need for an American friendship disappears. The international then usually becomes increasingly entrenched in the external aspects of an American lifestyle, while becoming much less open to Americans, their values and beliefs.

One goal of the Host Family Program, therefore, is to build growing, lifelong international friendships, based on shared experiences and mutual understanding. A host family's care in the first three months to a year of a student's arrival can make the difference between hostility and appreciation. The host family will also be able to help the student adjust to practical American living and culture. Although the friendships you build hosting a student may last a lifetime, DCSS is asking you to only commit for one year as a Host Family. Your involvement beyond the one year will be handled on a case by case basis.

Finally, the sustained, deepening friendship of a host family has incredible evangelistic power because it is so uniquely different from general American culture, and because it affords time for the Gospel to be seen and understood in relationship. A Christian host family must, therefore, also consider the spiritual implications of the relationship. It our intention that International Students attending DCSS are already Christians. However, in certain cases we may have a non-Christian attend DCSS or a student may be a nominal Christian. Christians yearn to know God and to help others to trust him as well. As families genuinely care for their students as friends and whole people, they will also seek and discover opportunities to help people who are ready to enter the kingdom of God. Further, growth for both parties results as each struggles to reconcile differing views with its own existing cultural grid, and to determine where and how cultures and biblical Christianity relate. This is essential to Christian maturity.

Of course, international students are not the only ones who benefit. The inherent rewards of international friendships to Americans and their children are many. One gets to see the world (current events, politics, distribution of wealth, war, family, relationships, values and beliefs, etc.) through the eyes of a different culture. This can affect one's ministry priorities, use of resources, career goals, choice of friends, and even day-to-day lifestyle as one is exposed to the variety in God's world and begins to act on God's intentions for it. Further, being a host family is a wonderful way to experience the joy of being a servant for Christ's sake, which Scripture says is the only road to blessing and life (Mark 8-10). The value of seeing our own culture, priorities

and government processes through the eyes of someone from another culture helps us to better understand what it is we truly do value.

### **Beginning Friendship through Conversation**

The best conversations with international students begin at home in your prayer closet! Pray that God will give you meaningful conversation. Then keep your eyes and ears open for good starting points.

Conversation may begin over food, language, clothes, customs, a lecture, or something in his or her room, such as a poster or picture on the wall, the books in the bookshelf, or even a prayer rug.

It's good to speak slowly and clearly, and to avoid insider terminology or slang. Let them know you're interested in learning about their culture and language.

Don't give up if there's difficulty in communication! If you feel something hasn't been understood, then say it again, not louder, but using other (simpler) words. International students are having more difficulty than you are. They will appreciate your patience and effort at trying to understand.

Often it's more relaxing and easier to talk if you're eating or drinking something. You may need to offer something more than once (in some cultures it's polite to refuse several times first).

In your conversation, be sure to show genuine interest. We do this through asking questions and being a good listener. Let the international students tell about themselves, their home country, and their experiences. You should share about yourself as well, so the conversation isn't one-sided.

In our political, volatile world, sometimes "hot" political themes or arguments come up. It's wise to avoid such topics. If you get caught by a "hot issue," it's possible to say, "You have an interesting viewpoint. I probably haven't thought about that as much as you have. Why do you feel that way about it?" Listening without arguing will show them you're interested, and after listening, it may be easier to gently ask about something else.

Don't be judgmental of their thoughts, views, or culture. And don't be too surprised if they criticize our country. This is all part of learning to live in a new culture.

As your international friends share about themselves, ask "why" type questions. For example, "Why do you wish to study medicine?" This helps move the conversation to issues of life, goals and faith.

As you converse with each other, pray in silence, asking God to give you an opportunity to share your faith, but don't force it. There will be other chances. It's helpful and freeing to remember, ultimately, no one comes to faith because of us, but because of the Holy Spirit's work.

Whenever the conversation moves toward faith, be sure to ask what they mean when they use religious expressions. He or she could mean something quite different from what you think. As you rely on the Spirit of God, you may find an opportunity to share something of what Christ has done for you. Most international students will listen carefully as you share personal things from your own life experience.

### **Myths About Being a Host Family**

**Myth #1: Since we have agreed to do this we are giving up our family's normal life for a year.**

You have made a significant commitment. However, if the need for a break arises there are families that will step in and host your student for a weekend and sometimes even longer to give you a change of pace.

**Myth #2: Host families are financially responsible for the foreign exchange student's living expenses.**

International students, NOT host families, are responsible for their own living expenses. You are responsible for "room and board." Their natural parents and families will provide them with enough money to cover the following: school lunch fare, pocket cash, phone bills, educational supplies/expenses and recreational spending money .

**Myth #3: Host families are required to placate to every whim of the international student.**

Absolutely not. Foreign exchange students have responsibilities – just like the other kids in one's home. Students should adapt to their host family's lifestyle and activities as well as house rules. Because the international student is being hosted for academic purposes opposed to a vacation, the student program necessitates both effort and work to enable learning. (Your international student is expected to assist with the host family chores).