AFS Educational Methodology Project: AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum

February 2016
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Introducing the New AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum

Dear AFS colleagues,

For the past decade, AFS has increasingly embraced and acknowledged its role as a non-formal education organization dedicated to increasing intercultural awareness and skills of students, families, volunteers, schools and staff involved in our programs. So it was with much enthusiasm that in 2009 I accepted the charge to reinvigorate and lead AFS’s education efforts around the world.

Thanks to the AFS Network’s joint efforts to champion education and intercultural learning at all levels of our organization—whether in the local chapter, at the national board, through regional bodies or globally—I am happy to report that over the past six years, AFS has continued to build an even more robust learning environment for all of our stakeholders.

Today, AFS provides intercultural learning opportunities through exchange, study abroad, host family, school, volunteer and social impact programs in 102 countries, delivered by 59 AFS Network Organizations that are supported by more than 50,000 volunteers and 900 staff. By leveraging our longstanding commitment to intercultural learning, research and best practices, we are now enhancing the AFS experience by developing specific learning journeys and curricula for students, host families and volunteers.

We began the process of distinguishing AFS Intercultural Programs from other exchange, study abroad and volunteer organizations by emphasizing the importance of combining our immersion experiences with structured learning and reflection guided by the 16 AFS Education Goals. The AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program for volunteers and staff has been enthusiastically received and widely respected since it was debuted in 2010.

In 2013, we continued the process by launching the AFS Educational Methodology Review Project to help AFS stay relevant and improve our expertise in the field of intercultural learning. Specifically, this project was designed to ensure that AFSers develop the 21st century intercultural skills, knowledge and understanding needed to become active global citizens and create positive change for a more just and peaceful world.

The AFS Educational Methodology Review Project represents one of the largest milestones in AFS’s educational practice, possibly the most significant development since the famous 1983 AFS Montreal Workshop in which the underpinnings of our learning approach were first formally articulated.
The AFS Educational Methodology Review Project Work Group brought together a diverse set of resources from around the world to provide their perspectives on education, programs, support and organizational development to refine and clearly articulate how AFS helps our participants become intercultiurally competent. The result of their work clarified the purpose and expectations of the AFS educational methodology and made an urgent call for improvements in how we support the AFS Learning Journey concept so that AFS students and families (and eventually volunteers) can achieve the educational goals that are core to our programs.

To tackle this challenge, the AFS Educational Methodology Review Project had to address two major questions:

1. What learning processes does AFS use to help AFSers work through our 16 AFS Educational Goals?
2. How do we help AFSers learn from and “make meaning” of their immersive experience living in another country or working with students from another culture?

In early 2014, the project group developed seven recommendations outlining how we can transform our existing practices to maximize educational impact. Their recommendations make clear that improving the original student AFS Learning Journey requires changing the way we communicate and implement our programs at all levels of involvement.

7 Recommendation to Improve How We Help Others Learn
(AFES Educational Methodology Review)
Then, between June and December 2014, and in keeping with the approach of working together on key education and intercultural learning initiatives, two groups of stakeholders from around the AFS Network convened to leverage their expertise, experiences, knowledge and diverse perspectives and address two recommendations targeted specifically to our student participants: **Recommendation #1: Adopt a Shared Comprehensive Participant Curriculum** and **Recommendation #3: Turn Monthly Contacts into Monthly Learning Reflections**.

Based on the AFS Educational Goals and good experiential learning practices from around the world, the first project group was tasked to help develop a shared curriculum for the AFS Network to use in the before, during and after stages of the traditional AFS intercultural exchange program. The AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum presented in this report sets the framework for developing materials for each touch point of the improved AFS Student Learning Journey that begins when the student first learns about AFS.

The second project group had three tasks:

1. Discuss best ways to turn monthly contacts into monthly contacts & learning reflections,
2. Outline the recommended competences, skills and training needed by AFS support persons to successfully support these monthly contacts & learning reflections,
3. Develop a set of guidelines for monthly contacts & learning reflections to be piloted.

The new AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum outlined in the following pages is the result of the combined effort of these groups. It proposes the next level of intercultural learning for AFS and 21st century students.

Respectfully submitted,

**Melissa Liles.**
Chief Education Officer, AFS Intercultural Programs
Contributors

Our special thanks and acknowledgement for contributing to this Curriculum go to the following members of the Project Group for Recommendation #1: Adopt a shared comprehensive participant curriculum, Project Group for Recommendation #3: Turning Monthly Contacts into Monthly Learning Reflections and the involved AFS International staff.

Barbara Telser – AFS USA
Christine Delattre – AFS Belgium Flanders
Daniel Monhof – AFS Germany
David Blythe – AFS International
Diar Andiani – AFS Indonesia
Erin Abrams – AFS USA
Eunice Neta – AFS Portugal
Gábor Csikós – AFS Hungary
Helen Walker – AFS New Zealand
Ingeborg Suppin-Fabisch – AFS Austria
Jana Holla – AFS Egypt
Luisa Novelli – AFS Argentina and Uruguay
Marcela Lapertosa - AFS International
Melissa Liles - AFS International
Milena Miladinovic - AFS International
Monica Wittman – AFS Costa Rica
Raquel Martinez - AFS International
Sheryl Tucker - AFS International
Susan Yamada – AFS Japan
Susana Chamorro – AFS Paraguay
Suyin Chia – AFS Malaysia
Yin Chang – AFS China

Additional thanks go to the members of the AFS International Education & Intercultural Learning Team and to our colleagues from around the AFS world who contributed to the AFS Educational Methodology Review Project.
AFS Educational Methodology Statement for Students

How we help AFSers reach the AFS Educational Goals

AFS helps students, families, volunteers, staff and all people it touches develop the 21st century intercultural skills, knowledge and understanding needed to become active global citizens and create positive change for a more just and peaceful world.

OUR APPROACH: LEARNING AS A JOURNEY OF CHANGE

AFS believes that intercultural challenges and learning moments are inevitable parts of our everyday lives, our classrooms and public spaces. To prepare students to engage effectively across cultural and other differences, we take our young participants on a transformative learning journey. Through our programs and other offerings, we help participants:

- Learn firsthand about the impact of culture on values and the decisions they make,
- Gain the ability to better see themselves through the eyes of others
- Challenge assumptions,
- Broaden their views on cultural stereotypes and global issues,
- Begin to understand how to shift perspectives effectively, appropriately and authentically.

OUR APPROACH: A GOALS-BASED CURRICULUM AND METHODS

The AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum focuses on students’ specific needs as emerging leaders and considers the practical application of 16 AFS Educational Goals for personal, academic, civic and future professional use. The AFS experience is a critical milestone for our students in their journey to becoming interculturally competent, responsible global citizens and agents of positive social change.

Focused on different aspects of personal, interpersonal, cultural and global awareness and development, the 16 AFS Educational Goals serve as the backbone of the AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum that shapes the student’s AFS experience. The curriculum includes carefully chosen activities, facilitated conversations and other exercises that are directly tied to the 40 learning objectives that make up the AFS Educational Goals. This journey and curriculum have evolved out of AFS’s commitment to leverage experience, research and best practices in the areas of student growth and intercultural development since our exchange program was launched in 1946.
OUR APPROACH: COMBINING IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES WITH STRUCTURED LEARNING

At the core of AFS’s intercultural learning opportunities for students are exchange and study abroad programs in which we place participants in a safe but culturally different environment. However, no matter how important the immersion experience is, simply living with a host family and attending a local school are not enough to develop the practical and highly coveted intercultural skills and understanding needed today. To become active global citizens, participants require support, encouragement and skills training to make their experiences meaningful intercultural learning opportunities. That’s why AFS programs are designed to help and prepare participants to fully engage with their host families, get involved in school activities beyond the classroom, perhaps volunteer in their local community and begin creating lifelong friendships.

Research demonstrates that these goals are much more likely to be achieved when students receive state-of-the-art pedagogically designed guidance before, during and after the exchange from specially trained AFS volunteers and staff.

OUR APPROACH: A COMPLEMENT TO CLASSROOM LEARNING

Most AFS student programs include a formal education component (with participants attending secondary school)—and all offer informal everyday situational learning. The AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum enhances the exchange experience through a rigorous non-formal education program that is goal-based, developmentally designed and uses designated learning facilitators.

These lessons, discussions and activities take place outside of a classroom or traditional academic setting. Instead, trained AFS volunteers and staff work in partnership with host families, schools and the students to support progressive learning activities and discussions that encourage students to continually examine their own world views, explore alternative outlooks and adjust their perspectives, mindset and behaviors accordingly. AFS support volunteers and staff view themselves not only as guidance providers, but also as co-learners alongside the student in the AFS experience.

OUR APPROACH: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING = ENHANCED LEARNING

AFS believes in the strength of experiential learning. We put students at the center of the developmental process, guiding and supporting them along the way. Students are taught how to learn from and “make meaning” of their new life using tools to help them reflect and analyze their experiences in a structured way. They are then encouraged to experiment and adjust their behaviors based on insights gained—and continue the cycle of learning.
OUR APPROACH: LEARNING FOR LIFE AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Finally, the AFS Student Learning Journey is a lifelong experience with a defined starting point and regular milestones, but no true end date. Students—as well as our volunteers—are constantly learning, beginning with their first contact with the organization and continuing long after finishing their official program involvement. Many students continue their development by becoming active volunteers for the organization, host families and/or participants in other AFS programs. In all of these situations, we also offer learning journeys to deepen and strengthen insights and skills.

AFS offers a transformative learning journey: This illustration demonstrates how AFS students perceive and think about the world and how this perception evolves over time as they go through the different phases of the intercultural experience. Students start the journey with a specific set of values and beliefs (BEFORE), which expand as they face a new culture with its own particular set of values (DURING). The students’ world views keep transforming when they return home (AFTER) and begin integrating what they’ve learned with what they already believed. This final process helps students develop a more complex and critical way of thinking and perceiving the world.

SUMMARY

AFS’s educational methodology is:

- Transformative
- Goal-based
- Combines immersive experiences with structured learning
- Non-formal (a complement to the classroom)
- Experiential
- Lifelong

These principles guide the AFS Student Learning Journey in which student participants work toward the AFS Educational Goals in a progressive, developmentally designed manner to become interculturally competent, responsible global citizens and agents of positive social change.
INTEGRATING THE AFS STUDENT LEARNING JOURNEY CURRICULUM INTO THE AFS EXPERIENCE

Five components are the hallmarks of the AFS Student Learning Journey methodology: immersion, orientation, support, tools and resources. Together, they support the AFS Student Learning Journey, helping students work through the 16 AFS Educational Goals based curriculum in a progressive, developmentally designed manner. The innovative curriculum uses a variety of proven learning formats and resources to engage students. These range from educational newsletters and role-playing activities to language lessons and recommended social impact projects—all designed to help students process their personal, academic, civic and professional growth, and learn from their reactions to new, and sometimes difficult, situations.

The AFS intercultural learning experience is not confined to the time spent abroad. As mentioned earlier, the AFS Student Learning Journey starts before students leave their home country. From the moment they apply to an AFS program, students are asked to reflect on who they are, what strengths they bring to the experience and what challenges they might face when living in another country. Once they complete their exchange, AFS provides further opportunities for reflection and development through re-entry orientation sessions and materials, as well as an invitation to become involved in the organization as a volunteer—including participation in the AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program, our well-established adult training program for personal, professional and overall intercultural competence development. AFS student learning is immersive and more.

Scheduled group orientation sessions before, during and after the AFS experience provide students with the knowledge, coping strategies and skills needed to have a meaningful intercultural experience. Guidelines for these orientations are included in the AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum, which replaces the AFS Orientation Framework. This curriculum is designed for use throughout the global AFS Network to ensure the quality and consistency of AFS exchange and study abroad programs that is delivered by multiple volunteers and staff in the sending and hosting countries. At the same time, AFS organizations are encouraged to adapt relevant portions of the curriculum to best suit their local realities.

Students also receive individualized support with improved recommendations outlined in the new curriculum. At least once a month, students work with trained volunteers to discuss their experiences. These contacts are officially treated as Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections, helping students develop a deeper appreciation of cultural differences and the most effective and appropriate ways to deal with them, as well as how to apply this learning later in life. Also in 2016, AFS will release the AFS Host Family Learning Journey Curriculum to support and enhance the experience of host families as co-
participants in the AFS intercultural exchange programs.

By linking our “learning to live together” philosophy to the defining global issues facing humanity, the new AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum will continue to empower an inclusive community of global citizens determined to build bridges among cultures and tackle the world’s interconnected problems.
AFS Educational Goals

Increased cultural competence is the stepping stone for a global tomorrow and a diverse today. In support of this mission, AFS has created 16 Educational Goals, each focused on different aspects of personal, interpersonal and community development. These goals serve as the backbone for AFS exchange programs and help participants develop the knowledge and skills that are necessary to succeed in an increasingly globalized workforce.

**Personal values and skills:** As a result of their experiences, participants learn to turn difficult situations into valuable opportunities for personal growth. They are challenged to reassess their values, stretch their capacities and practice new life skills while gaining awareness of previously hidden aspects of their own personalities.

**Interpersonal relationship building:** AFS participants become fully involved in daily living and working arrangements with a variety of people in the new environment. These skills are transferable to many other settings during the participant’s lifetime.

**(Inter)cultural knowledge and sensitivity:** The AFS exchange experience deepens participants’ insights into their home culture as well as their knowledge of their host (or visiting) cultures—both strengths and weaknesses—from the perspective of an outsider.

**Global issues awareness:** AFS participants become able to empathize with their hosts’ perspective on some of these problems, and thus able to appreciate that workable solutions must be culturally sensitive, not merely chronologically feasible.
PERSONAL REALM

1 **Self-awareness**
   - To become more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture.
   - To learn how to manage their internal moods, emotions and impulses, to use their inner resources to handle stress and ambiguity, and to show patience with other people who are in learning situations.

2 **Creative thinking**
   - To view ordinary things, events and values from a fresh perspective so they are able to generate innovative ideas and solutions.

3 **Critical thinking**
   - To look beyond superficial appearances and to be skeptical of stereotypes.
   - To form their own opinions based on recognizing that there are different ways to view things, more than one source of information and more than one solution to a problem.

4 **Motivation and self-confidence**
   - To be comfortable and eager to pursue new learning situations.
   - To be comfortable seeking support and receiving constructive criticism.
   - To feel confident in their own abilities, to have a strong sense of self-worth and to be self-reliant.

5 **Defining self in terms of ideals and values**
   - To develop personal goals in terms of academic knowledge and skills, character building, family interaction, etc.
   - To define and value themselves in terms of ideals and goals rather than material worth and to resist peer pressure that belittles the value of other individuals or groups.
INTERPERSONAL REALM

6 Empathy

• To listen and be mindful of the needs of other people and to use different perspectives in approaching problems and everyday situations.

• To have a deeper concern for and sensitivity to others, and to expand their capacity to perceive and respond to the values, feelings and realities of others.

• To be able to manage disagreements with others effectively and respectfully.

7 Flexibility and social skills

• To be comfortable handling a wide range of social situations and to adapt to new environments by applying appropriate behaviors in diverse contexts.

• To enjoy themselves in the company of others and to be less preoccupied with their own needs or how others view them.

• To adjust to changing social circumstances and show greater flexibility in adjusting to new people, social situations and cultural norms.

8 Communication skills

• To develop skills in listening actively and thoughtfully and to respond with respect for the other person.

• To express themselves easily both verbally and non-verbally.

• To converse actively with a wide range of people.

• To speak with confidence in front of large groups.

9 Commitment to others and contributing to the group

• To engage with others in a spirit of cooperation, with respect and appreciation for their goals and decisions.

• To contribute actively and positively in school, community and family life.

• To be worthy of and to inspire trust.
CULTURAL REALM

10 Building intercultural friendships
- To interact with people and communities that are different from their own and to develop and maintain meaningful and long-term relationships across cultures and backgrounds.
- To actively seek out and form new relationships with people from different cultures or backgrounds.

11 Cultural knowledge and awareness
- To become more aware of their own culture and recognize its influence on their behavior and attitudes.
- To learn about and understand the institutions, customs, traditions, practices and current issues in the host country, and to understand their values, attitudes and behaviors.
- To describe the complexity and richness of both their home and host cultures and be able to discuss cultures without stereotyping or making judgmental statements.
- To understand the concepts of “culture” and intercultural adaptation.

12 Foreign language skills and non-verbal communication
- To communicate effectively in multicultural environments: to speak, read and write in the language of the host culture and come to understand its jokes and humor, and to recognize, use and react appropriately to non-verbal signals of the host country.
- To appreciate the value of learning and using other languages.

13 Intercultural effectiveness
- To recognize cultural differences and to adapt their behavior and perception according to the cultural context.
- To appreciate diversity and display tolerance and respect for people with diverse backgrounds, attitudes, opinions, lifestyles and values.
- To reduce intercultural anxiety concerning exposure to new people, social situations and cultural norms.
GLOBAL REALM

14 Global concern: interest in and concern about world affairs and awareness of the impact of one’s choices on others

• To develop an increased curiosity and concern about world affairs, and to develop a sustained commitment to obtaining information from many sources and seeking out perspectives from other cultures in understanding world situations and problems.

• To have an increasing knowledge of a range of world issues that affect people and divide us, such as human rights, environmental issues and poverty.

15 Global understanding: appreciation of cultural interdependence

• To understand the interdependence of the global community and have an increased awareness of the larger impact that their personal choices and actions have in other parts of the world.

• To gain competence in understanding the causes of conflict between cultures.

16 Commitment to contributing to the world community

• To be willing and ready to work with others to help build peace, improve world conditions and commit to actions that will bring about a just and peaceful world.

• To engage in voluntary service toward the improvement of the local and global communities.
The AFS Student Learning Journey

SENDING PARTNER  HOSTING PARTNER

BEFORE
- Recruitment
- Application Process
- Selection Process
- Acceptance Messaging
- Welcome Messaging
- Language Learning
- Pre-Departure Orientation

DURING
- Arrival Orientation
- Monthly Contact & Learning Reflection
- Post-Arrival Orientation
- Monthly Contact & Learning Reflection
- Mid-Stay Orientation (Evaluation)
- Monthly Contact & Learning Reflection
- Welcome Back Messaging
- Monthly Contact & Learning Reflection
- End-Of-Stay Orientation
- Monthly Contact & Learning Reflection

AFTER
- Re-Entry Messaging
- Re-Entry Orientation
- Volunteer Recruitment
- Monthly Contact & Learning Reflection
Distribution of 16 *AFS Educational Goals* Among the *AFS Student Learning Journey* Touch Points

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### INTERPERSONAL

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### LANGUAGE LEARNING*

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*Language learning is encouraged throughout the AFS experience.*
BEFORE the AFS Intercultural Experience

Recruiting and preparing students to begin their intercultural learning journey

This section contains activities to address AFS Educational Goals for:

- Recruitment
- Application Process
- Selection Process
- Acceptance Messaging
- Welcome Messaging
- Language Learning
- Pre-Departure Orientation
BEFORE the AFS Intercultural Experience

Recruiting and preparing students to begin their intercultural learning journey

Before the AFS Intercultural Experience provides specific guidelines for volunteers and staff members to support students in the first phase of their intercultural learning journey, starting with recruitment and continuing through the pre-departure orientation.

Under this new curriculum, the AFS Student Learning Journey begins during the recruitment process. Right from the start, AFS should invite interested students to join us in an intercultural learning experience and begin exploring what it means to become a global citizen. AFS recruitment, acceptance and welcome messages should clearly present our programs as exciting learning opportunities, using content, photos, videos and AFS branding (visuals and messages) to engage and inspire students to take this meaningful journey of a lifetime with us.

The application and selection processes provide opportunities for future AFS students to think about their identity (cultural, ethnic, etc.), what’s motivating them to consider studying abroad, and what they know and think about their own culture and other cultures (including the culture of their destination community). Plus, now is the time for students to begin learning the language of the destination community. It’s also good to begin discussions about their future plans.

In addition to providing logistical and other types of pre-departure support, this is also the time to introduce students to the AFS Student Learning Journey and encourage them to reflect on their expectations, plans and coping strategies during their AFS experience.
Recruitment (Marketing and Promotion)

LEARNING FOCUS

The recruitment process provides an ideal opportunity to introduce prospective students and their families to the benefits of intercultural learning with AFS and why this is an important element of the exchange experience, offering a set of life skills that are helpful personally, academically and professionally. Equally important, promotion materials—from word-of-mouth discussions to presentations to social media—should include these benefits and invite interested students to join AFS for a journey of cultural self-discovery that will help them develop critical 21st century skills that global citizens will need to live, work and collaborate in an interconnected global world.

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND ACTIVITIES:

1 Personal: Self-awareness
   • To become more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture.

   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS
   • Recruitment materials (word of mouth, formal presentations, print materials, websites and social media) should invite students to a journey of cultural self-discovery and:
     - Include basic information about or concepts covered in the AFS Educational Goals.
     - Explain how students are part of a larger interconnected community.
     - Emphasize why becoming interculturally aware and competent is necessary for self- and community development in the 21st century.
     - Add short videos or other interactive content featuring basic intercultural learning facts, advice or quizzes on your website/digital presence.

4 Personal: Motivation and self-confidence
   • Prospective students are comfortable and eager to pursue new learning situations.

   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS
   • Include messages in promotional material that invite potential students to an intercultural experience in a new environment with the emphasis on culture and learning.
Application Process

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The application process is an ideal opportunity to begin leading the prospective students through self-reflection activities that help them explore their own cultural identity and become comfortable talking about themselves and their community. Strong communication skills are important in the exchange experience, so AFS volunteers and staff reviewing applications should pay close attention to how applicants express themselves.

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND ACTIVITIES:

1. Personal: Self-awareness
   - To become more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS
   - Application questions encourage self-reflection about own cultural influences. Ask questions such as:
     - Who is the biggest influence on your life and what values did they impart?
     - How would you describe your cultural heritage?
     - What cultural group do you identify yourself with?
   - Offer optional interactive learning modules to your web pages that link to the application form. These should expand on the intercultural learning activities in the recruitment process touch point.

2. Interpersonal: Communication skills
   - To express themselves easily both verbally and non-verbally.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS

Applications include sufficient open-ended questions (answers can be narrative, video, photos, etc.) and are reviewed in the context of potential for self-expression and the prospective student’s ability to convey meaningful information relative to questions asked.
Selection Process

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Partners should follow the established AFS Guidelines for Assessing Candidates and Selecting Students (available in the ICL Library at iclibrary afs.org). This includes a series of individual, family and group interviews and activities to determine the students’ potential to have a successful AFS experience. This period is also a significant touch point in the students’ journey of self-discovery—a time when they should think hard about their motivation—why they want to go abroad—and become more comfortable presenting their ideals and values to others in appropriate ways.

Volunteers conducting the interviews and assessments should be aware that this is often a stressful time for prospective students, and take this into consideration when planning activities, while also observing how students handle pressure and ambiguity at this stage.

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND ACTIVITIES:

1. Personal: Self-awareness

   • To become more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture.

   • To learn how to manage their internal moods, emotions and impulses, and to use their inner resources to handle stress and ambiguity and to show patience with other people who are in learning situations.

PROSPECTIVE STUDENT ACTIVITIES

• Ask interview questions that encourage students to explore their own cultural awareness.
  
  - How would you describe the culture you feel a part of?

• Ask interview questions that help students reflect on past experiences dealing with difficult situations and how they handle their emotions. For example:
  
  - What was the most challenging moment in your life?
  
  - What did you do? How did you handle the situation?
  
  - What skills were useful at the time?
  
  - What would you do differently if faced with a similar situation?
Personal: Motivation and self-confidence

- To be comfortable and eager to pursue new learning situations.
- To be comfortable seeking support and receiving constructive criticism.
- To feel confident in their own abilities, to have a strong sense of self-worth and to be self-reliant.

PROSPECTIVE STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Ask questions to determine interest in actively learning about and experiencing new cultures. For example:
  - How do you now (or plan to) learn about other people, cultures and languages?

- Expose potential students to new situations during the interview or selection camp. For example:
  - Have students eat using a method they may never have used before (chopsticks, fingers only, eating everything with spoons or using a fork and knife, etc.).

- Develop group activities that emphasize the importance of feedback and demonstrate how feedback can improve their performance. For example:
  - Have the group cook a meal together with ingredients from another culture or assign an art project with some cultural elements such as making origami. When completed, debrief what went well and what was challenging, then discuss how sometimes it is important to reach out to someone who has the knowledge they don’t. It could be related to AFS support volunteers or their host family and new friends acting as cultural informants.

- Assess how comfortably students (even introverts) can initiate conversations and/or actively participate in group activities and provide tools to encourage such initiative. For example:
  - When assigning a task such as cooking or setting up a room or encouraging students to converse during meals, mix students with people they do not know and observe how they interact.

Personal: Defining self in terms of ideals and values

- To develop personal goals in terms of academic knowledge and skills, character building, family interaction, etc.

- To define and value themselves in terms of ideals and goals rather than material worth and to resist peer pressure that belittles the value of other individuals or groups.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS

- Explore students’ expectations regarding their AFS programs and the intercultural exchange. Ask some of these questions:
  - What sparked your interest in an exchange program?
  - What attracted you most about this idea?
  - What do you expect to gain by doing this program?
  - Who supports you?
  - Who has concerns or is not very happy with this idea?

Please note: This stage is about overall expectations, not about setting goals. Goal setting (how the student plans to achieve those expectations) will come later in the process.

- Ask questions that help students reflect on what is unique about them and how they are different from others in the same age group or family. Some examples:
  - What do you have in common with your classmates and family members?
  - What is different?
  - What personality trait(s) are you proud of?
  - How would you describe your personal values?

**Interpersonal: Empathy**

- To listen and be mindful of the needs of other people and to use different perspectives in approaching problems and everyday situations.

**PROSPECTIVE STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

- Ask questions and/or use exercises that have students clearly and fairly presenting viewpoints of others with whom they disagree. For example:
  - Use the “Take A Stand” activity where people have to identify their own position on a topic and then defend the opposite position with the same motivation and passion.

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**“Take A Stand” Activity**

Prepare a line on the floor with “Agree” on one end and “Disagree” on the other. Then choose a prompt or prompts which call for agreement or disagreement with a particular statement and ask participants to stand on the part of the line which best describes their stand on that statement. Then ask students to provide an argument for their position. Once everyone shared their position, have them swap and work in pairs to argue in favor of the opposite position. Then debrief the activity with the following guiding questions:

- How did you feel during the activity?
- How did you find having to defend your original position?
- How about when you got to the opposite one?
- What were the main obstacles to defend any of the positions?
- What did you learn from this activity?
- How can you use what you learned in a future intercultural exchange program?
Interpersonal: Flexibility and social skills

- To be comfortable handling a wide range of social situations and to adapt to new environments by applying appropriate behaviors in diverse contexts.
- To enjoy themselves in the company of others and to be less preoccupied with their own needs or how others view them.

PROSPECTIVE STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Use group activities to evaluate, encourage and help students develop tolerance for frustration and ambiguity. For example:
  - Consider using a simulation game like “Barnga” developed by Sivasailam “Thiagi” Thiagarajan to help students explore communication problems that often arise in intercultural situations. Follow the “Barnga” activity with a debriefing discussion about reactions that include anger or withdrawal when students are faced with circumstances they do not understand or are beyond their control.
  - Ask them: How can you suspend/manage those initial reactions?
- Determine and develop students’ willingness to accommodate other people’s habits and customs. Asking questions like the ones below can help introduce this topic:
  - How would you feel if your host family wants you to share a bedroom with a host brother or sister?
  - How would you handle a request to not smoke (especially in the house) or to attend religious services of another faith or denomination?
  - Do you see these questions and requests as impositions or opportunities to learn more about the host culture and its values?

An Alternative to the “Take a Stand” Activity

An alternative to this activity is to use pairs of classical proverbs that contradict each other. Students work in pairs and each person has to defend and try to convince the other why they think their proverb is the right one. After a few minutes, students exchange proverbs and try defending the opposite one. You should then debrief the activity with the guiding questions above.

“Barnga”: A Simulation Game on Cultural Clashes

“Barnga” participants are led to believe that everyone plays by the same rules and considers the same behavior acceptable. This game highlights the miscommunications and severe challenges we can have when confronted with even the most subtle of differences in values. Go to www.thiagi.com for more information.
Acceptance Messaging

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE
Sending Partner in local language(s).

WHEN
Once prospective students have been accepted, the AFS office and/or volunteers in that country coordinate sending out a series of communications, including information and details about next steps in the process.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES
Send one or more acceptance letters that addresses both students and sending parents. Use these and all follow-up communications to reinforce the lifelong benefits of the program, the value of intercultural learning and AFS Educational Goals. In the first message, for instance, congratulate the students for embarking on this journey to become global citizens. Encourage them to use this opportunity to become more aware and tolerant of different cultures and to enjoy the benefits of learning new ideas and ways of doing things. Introduce students to or reiterate the importance and benefits of the intercultural experience based on the AFS Educational Goals that will help them adjust to their new surroundings and actively engage in and learn about different cultures.

Ask new students to check their email or other AFS communication channels regularly and to read the materials they will receive throughout their intercultural experience with AFS. Additionally, encourage students to read The Exchange Student Survival Kit, 2007 edition available in English, French and Spanish by Bettina Hansel, former head of Intercultural Learning and Research at AFS.

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND ACTIVITIES:

Personal: Self-awareness

• To become more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS

• In the acceptance packet, help newly selected students reflect on and better understand their cultural heritage, and explore their own opinions and perspectives.

• Ask questions like:
  - How would you describe the cultural groups you feel a part of?
  - What do you think are the main values of your culture?
  - Does everyone in your culture(s) share these values?
  - Do you feel you are a typical representative of your culture(s)?
  - Does every cultural group follow these values? Which groups do not?

• Suggest mini “assignments” that will encourage new students to observe people and neighborhoods. Ask them to take notes and then reflect on how the way people live in their neighborhood reflects their culture.

• Send students a list of movies and books that can help them reflect on
cultural identity. Go to the AFS Intercultural Learning blog at www.afs.org/blog/icl for inspiration and ideas.

**Cultural: Foreign language skills and nonverbal communication**

- To appreciate the value of learning and using other languages.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS**

- Encourage new students to start language learning immediately and share resources such as Rosetta Stone to help them do so.
- Contact icl@afs.org at the AFS International Education and Intercultural Learning Department to discuss exclusive Rosetta Stone language learning packages for the AFS Network.
Welcome Messaging

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE
Hosting Partner in English, possibly with limited messaging in host partner’s local language(s).

WHEN
Welcome messages are sent once the hosting partner commits to find a host family for the student.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES
Hosting offices create welcome packages that are engaging in terms of text, visuals and, where applicable, interactive content. Usually in the form of a booklet, the welcome package includes important information about the host culture and AFS destination, as well as appropriate language learning messages and prompts. Some useful tips for the welcome messages are:

• Make the material attractive to the teenage audience so they will actually read and use it.
• Eliminate unnecessary information. Fewer words and plenty of visuals will make it more interesting for the audience.
• Keep the number of pages to a minimum while still being effective.
• Consider using video, digital or other teenage-friendly methods to support delivery of this content.

Welcome messages encourage students to learn more about their destinations: the culture, the people, how typical families live, etc. It is very important that students are urged to begin or continue learning the language of their new country before they go abroad.

In addition to the welcome package, other communications that go out to the student during this time include those such as the host family announcement, student identification cards, etc. Other less formal communications might happen through a host chapter Facebook site or something similar. Some of the approaches listed below can be used to meet these educational goals, but be mindful of not overwhelming the student unintentionally.

Keep in mind that most of these materials are usually written in English, but this is often not the students’ native language, making it harder for them to read if the materials are too long.

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND ACTIVITIES:

Cultural: knowledge and awareness

• To learn about and understand the institutions, customs, traditions, practices and current issues in the host country, and to understand the values, attitudes and behaviors in.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS

- In the welcome package, include guidelines to help students communicate and understand how to behave appropriately, yet authentically, during the first days of their program. This content should be simple, engaging and related to daily life and issues that students are likely to face in the first weeks:
  - Provide descriptions of behaviors that may seem strange to a new arrival and advice on how to cope.
  - Share “Tips for Survival.” Remember not to go too deep here, as this is just the beginning of the process. A discussion of values will come in later during the Student Learning Journey.
  - Refer to websites or other tools that provide an overview of the country, traditions, etc.

Cultural: Foreign language skills and nonverbal communication

- To appreciate the value of learning and using other languages.
- To communicate effectively in multicultural environments: to speak, read and write in the language of the host culture and come to understand its jokes and humor, and to recognize, use and react appropriately to non-verbal signals of the host country.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS

Welcome package continued:

- Emphasize the importance of learning the host language.
- Include some basic vocabulary and useful phrases (including common slang, if appropriate) in the welcome package.
- Identify resources available for language learning such as Rosetta Stone, urge students to start using these resources and set a certain level they need to achieve before departure.
Language Learning

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE
Both Sending and Hosting Partners

WHEN
Critical to AFS programs, language learning should be encouraged as soon as the students are informed of their destination. As a key component of the Student Learning Journey, language learning should be emphasized and encouraged not only before the exchange, but also at every touch point during the AFS experience.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES
AFS volunteers and staff encourage students to use tools such as Rosetta Stone, attend classes at local language schools, or have local volunteers provide language learning assistance.

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND ACTIVITIES:

Cultural: Foreign language skills and nonverbal communication

• To appreciate the value of learning and using other languages.

• To communicate effectively in multicultural environments: to speak, read and write in the language of the host culture and come to understand its jokes and humor, and to recognize, use and react appropriately to non-verbal signals of the host country.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS

• Introduce students to tools like Rosetta Stone to begin their language learning before arriving in the host country. This can happen through email, letters or in-person meetings. Contact icl@afs.org at the AFS International Education and Intercultural Learning Department to discuss exclusive Rosetta Stone language learning packages for the AFS Network.

• Explain that AFS volunteers can serve as language tutors for students, if needed.

• Encourage students throughout the whole experience to take on new challenges that require using their new communication skills, including non-verbal ones. Non-verbal communication will be explored during Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections as well as through activities with the host family.

• Explain that the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections provide opportunities to discuss students’ progress on language learning and practice what they already know.
Pre-Departure Orientation

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Joint projects between sending and hosted students and/or intercultural simulations are ideal ways to begin to explore global issues, as the Global Realm of the educational goals is introduced at this stage. For example, working in pairs (a sending and a hosted student), students can discuss and debate issues like global warming, human rights, and xenophobia—and make presentations about their findings and experiences working together at a local chapter meeting. They also cover many other learning objectives (like motivation and self-confidence, communication skills, etc.) that are included in the pre-departure orientation.

However, to be successful, volunteer training prior to conducting orientations is critical, especially when facilitating and evaluating activities like intercultural simulations. Orientation volunteers and staff need to be trained in appropriate facilitation and debriefing techniques, for example through the AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program, the AFS Network-wide training and assessment program for volunteers and staff. (For more information, go to the Intercultural Learning section of the afs.org.)

Volunteers and staff conducting the pre-departure orientation are strongly encouraged to review the documents from the ICL for AFS & Friends series, such as Generalizations & Stereotypes, Debriefing Experiential Learning and Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle. (Some of these documents are available in up to six languages in the ICL Library at iclibrary.afs.org and on afs.org.)

This orientation should also include the following sessions from the AFS Orientation Framework, which is also part of the ICL for AFS & Friends series (in the ICL Library at iclibrary.afs.org):

1. **AFS and You:** Place students’ participation in an AFS Program within the context of AFS’s history and mission.

2. **Personal Safety and Wellbeing:**
   - Identify challenges they may face in their exchange experience that could affect their health, safety and ability to stay on program for AFS.
   - List sources of support and contact information to help deal with difficult situations while abroad.
AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND ACTIVITIES:

1. Personal: Self-awareness
   - To become more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture.
   - To learn how to manage their internal moods, emotions and impulses, and to use their inner resources to handle stress and ambiguity and to show patience with other people who are in learning situations.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Help students better understand their cultural heritage and identity. Here are some examples to consider:
  - Ask students to share with each other what cultural groups they belong to and, perhaps, draw what they think a “typical” person from their culture looks like. This exercise is then expanded to discuss cultural values, cultural stereotypes and could be used as an introduction to discuss the concept of culture. Make sure students do not think about culture only in country terms; encourage them to identify interest groups/minorities, etc.
  - Introduce the concept of culture using metaphors such as an iceberg, onion, tree, dune, etc. (Look up Concepts and Theories of Culture for AFS & Friends in the ICL Library at iclibrary.afs.org for more information on models of culture.) Encourage students to reflect about what cultural groups have shaped their world views, perspectives and identity.
  - What are the shared values in your own culture?
  - How can they influence your intercultural experience?
- Have students create a personal AFS experience SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) to identify and understand their inner strengths, weaknesses and potential challenges in the exchange to come.

SWOT Analysis

- **STRENGTHS**
- **WEAKNESSES**
- **OPPORTUNITIES**
- **THREATS**
The Iceberg Model of Culture

Primarily in awareness

Fine arts  Literature
Drama  Classical music  Popular music
Folk-dancing  Games  Cooking  Dress

Primarily out of awareness

Notions of modesty  Conception of beauty
Ideals governing child raising  Rules of descent  Cosmology
Relationship to animals  Patterns of superior/subordinate relations
Definition of sin  Courtship practices  Conception of justice  Incentives to work
Notions of leadership  Tempo of work  Patterns of group decision-making
Conception of cleanliness  Attitudes to the dependent  Theory of disease
Approaches to problem solving  Conception of status mobility  Eye behaviour
Roles in relation to status by age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, etc.  Definition of insanity
Nature of friendship  Conception of “self”  Patterns of visual perception  Body language
Facial expressions  Notions about logic and validity  Patterns of handling emotions
Conversational patterns in various social contexts  Conception of past and future  Ordering of time
Preference for competition or co-operation  Social interaction rate  Notions of adolescence
Arrangement of physical space  Etc.
What are critical incidents?
According to Professor Bruce La Brack, a cultural anthropologist and interculturalist, critical incidents often revolve around a misunderstanding, a dispute, a linguistic error or other cultural faux pas. These events can highlight different cultural assumptions and values. They are about attitudes and behaviors that might (and probably will) be interpreted in different ways by different people; a given when people with cultural differences interact. (Bruce Le Brack is a member of the AFS Educational Advisory Council.)

What is the D.I.V.E. Model?
This four-step exercise helps you make sense of situations that are unfamiliar to you:
DESCRIBE:
Write down or say what you see in an objective, factual way.
INTERPRET:
Add your opinion about what you have described.
VERIFY:
Ask others or conduct research to check whether your interpretation is accurate?
EVALUATE:
Based on all of the above, how would you qualify and judge what you see?
This model is based on the D.I.E. (Describe, Interpret, Evaluate) exercise by Janet Bennett.

2 Personal: Creative thinking
- To view ordinary things, events, and values from a fresh perspective so they are able to generate innovative ideas and solutions.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES
- Present students with a critical incident such as a misunderstanding or conflict created by different underlying cultural values and ask them to come up with at least three to five ways to deal with it. Once students have shared all their ideas, push them to think more creatively and come up with five more options.
- Use a team building activity to kick off the meeting to help students identify creative ways to reach a common goal.

3 Personal: Critical thinking
- To look beyond superficial appearances and to be skeptical of stereotypes.
- To form their own opinions based on recognizing that there are different ways to view things, more than one source of information, and more than one solution to a problem.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES
- Introduce the difference between stereotypes and generalizations (This discussion should come after the session(s) on culture outlined below. See the ICL for AFS & Friends documents for a complete explanation of these important, but complex concepts in the ICL Library at iclibrary.afs.org.)
  - Help students recognize moments when they believed a stereotype, described someone in stereotypic ways or were stereotyped themselves. Make sure the students understand that they always meet a “person” and not a “culture.”
  - Students should also understand that generalizations provide a framework for approaching other people. However, unlike stereotypes, generalizations don’t include everyone in that group.
- Introduce students to using the D.I.V.E. model (with images or objects) as a tool for dealing with ambiguity and suspending judgment throughout their intercultural experience. (See box for more information and for complete D.I.V.E. activity.)

Please note: This is a key moment in the students’ learning experience—understanding and using D.I.V.E. will be the basis for other activities during their program and especially in the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections.
4 **Personal: Motivation and self-confidence**

- To be comfortable and eager to pursue new learning situations.
- To be comfortable seeking support and receiving constructive criticism.
- To feel confident in their own abilities, to have a strong sense of self-worth and to be self-reliant.

**STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

- Give students small assignments before and after the orientation sessions to engage in new situations, see them as learning opportunities and seek support in the process. For example:
  - Have students interview people in a new neighborhood or a cultural group they have never interacted with before.
- Discuss different situations where students would need to ask for support:
  - They do not get along with their host family,
  - They do not get along with their support volunteer,
  - They are not happy at school,
  - They are uncomfortable with some local values.
- Then ask the following questions:
  - *If you were in one of these situations, who would you contact or approach for help?*
  - *How would you seek help from this person or these people?*

5 **Personal: Defining self in terms of ideals and values**

- To develop personal goals in terms of academic knowledge and skills, character building, family interaction, etc.

**STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

- Help students set short-term goals (for the first two months) for each one of their expectations for the AFS experience. They may or may not be the same ones they had expressed during the selection process. Expectations are often revised throughout the Student Learning Journey.
- Share with students the *AFS Educational Goals* as a guide to help them develop personal learning goals during their exchange program.
6 Interpersonal: Empathy

- To listen and be mindful of the needs of other people and to use different perspectives in approaching problems and everyday situations.
- To have a deeper concern for and sensitivity to others and expand their capacity to perceive and respond to the values, feelings, and realities of others.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- To keep encouraging students to think about how “the others” would do something, repeat the “Take a Stand” exercise where people have to identify their own position on a topic and then defend the opposite position with the same motivation and passion. Choose a different topic than the one used during the selection process and help participants also reflect on the difference between the first time they did it and now.
- Remind students of the Platinum Rule: Treat others the way they want to be treated.

7 Interpersonal: Communication skills

- To develop skills in listening actively and thoughtfully and to respond with respect for the other person.
- To converse actively with a wide range of people.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Ask students to prepare a presentation about their own culture, followed by Q&A to help them develop their communication skills.
- Introduce students to hosted students to help them get comfortable meeting and talking with people from other countries who may or may not be fluent in their language.
- Invite students to help current AFS host students with their language learning and vice versa.

10 Cultural: Building intercultural friendships

- To interact with people and communities that are different from their own and to develop and maintain meaningful and long-term relationships across cultures and backgrounds.
- To actively seek out and form new relationships with people from different cultures or backgrounds.
STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Bring incoming AFS students and your current AFS host students together for group projects and assignments. Projects can range from pairing up to make a presentation about AFS at the local school, helping local volunteers or volunteering on a community project. Make sure that these projects and assignments are related to the Global Realm of the AFS Educational Goals. These activities should happen outside of the orientation session.

### Cultural: knowledge and awareness

- To become more aware of their own culture and recognize its influence on their behavior and attitudes.
- To understand the concepts of “culture” and intercultural adaptation.
- To appreciate diversity and display tolerance and respect for people from diverse backgrounds, attitudes, opinions, lifestyles and values.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Group students according to program destination if possible to discuss content from the welcome message provided by the Hosting Partner.
- Run an intercultural simulation activity like “Barnga,” “BaFa BaFa,” “Ecotonos” or “Derdians.” (See page 26 for more information.) These intercultural simulation activities are instructional, and engage and challenge participants with experiences integral to encounters between people of more than one cultural group.

### Global: Global concern—interest in and concern about world affairs and awareness of one’s choices on others

- To develop an increased curiosity and concern about world affairs, to develop a sustained commitment to obtaining information from many sources and seek out perspectives from other cultures in understanding world situations and problems.
- To have an increasing knowledge of a range of world issues that affect people and divide us, such as human rights, environmental issues, and poverty.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Use activities such as community mapping as a good start for students to identify issues where they could have an impact.
- Refer to the ACTIVE Manual of Activities, developed by the European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL), for exercises and other resources to support intercultural learning goals of the Global Realm. You can find the manual at afsactivecitizens.org.
During the AFS Intercultural Experience

Helping students adjust, thrive and enjoy living and learning in another country

This section contains activities to address AFS Educational Goals for:

- Arrival Orientation
- Post-Arrival Orientation
- Mid-Stay Orientation (Evaluation)
- End-Of-Stay Orientation
- Monthly Contact & Learning Reflections
- Welcome Back Messaging
DURING the AFS Intercultural Experience

Helping students adjust, thrive and enjoy living and learning in another country

Welcoming students into the new environment and then regularly supporting them through their cultural discovery and adjustment processes are two key roles of AFS volunteers during this stage of the learning journey. Right from the start, volunteers are encouraged to “nudge” students to identify, explore and understand the new culture and to help students develop constructive coping strategies.

Volunteers also play an essential role in the different orientations and Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections that are staples of this phase in the students’ intercultural experience. The Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections begin within the first week of arrival in the local community and continue through the end-of-stay orientation.

Finally, this is also an opportunity for students to reflect on their home culture and the construction of their own identities and to prepare for the upcoming stages of the life-long journey with AFS.

The “nudge theory” approach argues that positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions can influence the motives, incentives, decision-making and learning of groups and individuals more effectively than direct instruction.

Coping strategies are methods a person uses when dealing with stressful situations.
Language Learning

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

AFS volunteers and staff encourage students to attend classes at local language schools, local religious centers or have local volunteers provide language learning assistance.

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND ACTIVITIES:

12 Cultural: Foreign language skills and nonverbal communication

• To appreciate the value of learning and using other languages. To communicate effectively in multicultural environments: to speak, read and write in the language of the host culture and come to understand its jokes and humor, and to recognize, use and react appropriately to non-verbal signals of the host country.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS

• Explain that AFS volunteers can serve as language tutors for students, if needed.

• Encourage students throughout the whole experience to take on new challenges that require using their new communication skills, including nonverbal ones.

• Use Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections as an opportunity to discuss students’ progress on language learning and practice what they already know.

• Create contests among hosted students to encourage them to improve their language skills.

• Design awards/prizes for students writing essays or articles in the local language.

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Hosting Partner during the exchange.

WHEN

As a key component of the Student Learning Journey, language learning should be emphasized and encouraged at every touch point during the AFS experience. Volunteers and staff should help students gain confidence in the local language during Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections in particular.
Arrival Orientation

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The arrival orientation is usually the first formal contact students have with AFS in the host country. While this is still a time to address the AFS Educational Goals, because of the timing and emotional state of the students, keep the learning touch points simple, practical and relevant for the first few weeks. The most significant role of this orientation is for students to receive logistical information and contact details about the local AFS organization, including tips on how to stay safe. Volunteers conducting this orientation should focus on helping students understand that AFS is there to support them and show them ways to seek practical support.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- Students may be very tired, excited and even jet-lagged so their attention span and ability to comprehend new ideas might be limited.
- Some students’ language skills might also be very limited at this stage affecting their ability to understand the content. Also, students have not been exposed to much local culture yet, so discussions about culture should be limited. Volunteers should keep learning sessions simple, practical and relevant for the first few weeks of the students’ experience.
- Just as in other orientations, some activities can be used or designed to address more than one learning objective.

This orientation should also include the following sessions:

1. **AFS and You:** Remind participants of the AFS Standards, Policies and Procedures rules (no driving, no drugs and no alcohol) and any other local rules they need to be aware of.

2. **Personal Safety and Wellbeing:**
   - Discuss laws, cultural attitudes and common behaviors around alcohol and smoking within their host culture,
   - Practice refusal skills they can use to stand up to peer or adult pressures to engage in situations that put them at risk,
   - Identify sources of support and contact information for help in difficult situations while abroad,
   - State how they can help ensure their own safety and wellbeing in their local community.
3. **Required Logistics:**

- Give students their AFS ID and health insurance cards and contact information for the local representative and support volunteer.
- Tell students what AFS events they and their host family are expected to attend throughout the year and when these will take place.

**AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND ACTIVITIES:**

4. **Personal: Motivation and self-confidence**

- To be comfortable seeking support and receiving constructive criticism.

**STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

- Help students identify and explore some of the challenges and difficulties they will face during their exchange. Emphasize that being challenged and making mistakes is normal and not a failure on their part. Encourage them to use these opportunities to reflect on and learn new things about themselves and their host culture.
- Explain that one way of coping with difficulties is to ask for help, and doing so is not a shame, nor a weakness.
- Ask students to brainstorm together to identify sources of support depending on the situation. For example:
  - *Who would you contact if you are homesick, having conflicts with host family, getting sick, needing help with school homework or local language, etc.?*
- Set up activities where students can list possible reasons for not seeking support and help when needed. Then review each one and think of alternatives where asking for support would have made a difference.
- Clarify the type of support that the Hosting Partner provides: How often is the support volunteer going to contact them, in what ways, when are they having orientations and where, etc.

5. **Personal: Defining self in terms of ideals and values**

- To develop personal goals in terms of academic knowledge and skills, character building, family interaction, etc.
- To define and value themselves in terms of ideals and goals rather than material worth and to resist peer pressure that belittles the value of other individuals or groups.
STUDENT ACTIVITIES

• Ask students about their motivation to go on an exchange program and encourage them to set clear goals for their exchange program or review the ones they’ve already set. For example:
  
  - Use future scenario exercises such as “In six months I would like to be doing...” and “I would consider my experience to be a success if...”

• To help foster empathy ask them to complete the following sentences and discuss:
  
  - “My host family will consider the experience a success if...” and “The AFS volunteers will consider the experience a success if______.”
  
  - Also add: “I would feel really bad if...” and “My host family would feel the experience was a mistake if______.”

• Help students compare and discuss their different goals and aims with each other.

• Help students express who they are, what things are important for them. For example:
  
  - Provide students with a list of values and ask them to put them in order of preference, then share with the group and discuss differences and similarities.

10 Cultural: Building intercultural friendships

• To interact with people and communities that are different from their own and to develop and maintain meaningful and long-term relationships across cultures and backgrounds.

• To actively seek out and form new relationships with people from different cultures or backgrounds.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

• Conduct activities that generate discussion on why it is useful to get to know people from other cultures and review the concepts of friendship and family in the host culture. This topic will be reinforced during Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections.

• Provide information (building upon the information they received in the Welcome Booklet) about the school system and what is expected from them during their program.

• Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of spending time with other exchange students.

• Share tips from previous students or use short videos about suggestions for building relationships in the host culture.
Post-Arrival Orientation

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The post-arrival orientation should go deeper into the Cultural Realm as students have already had the opportunity to experience some of the host culture. It is an ideal opportunity for deeper conversations about what the students have learned about themselves, their home and host cultures and what the adaptation issues they may be facing or will soon encounter. Volunteers work with students to more deeply develop constructive coping strategies and appropriate communication skills, which will be built on in the upcoming months of the intercultural experience.

This orientation should also include the following session:

1. Personal Safety and Wellbeing:
   - Identify warning signs that may indicate that they are encountering an inappropriate situation,
   - Demonstrate strategies for avoiding and getting themselves out of situations that put them at risk,
   - Create a personal safety plan that will guide them through challenges they may face.

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND ACTIVITIES:

Personal: Self-awareness

- To become more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture.
- To learn how to manage their internal moods, emotions and impulses, and to use their inner resources to handle stress and ambiguity and to show patience with other people who are in learning situations.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Conduct activities that show students ways of regulating emotions when exposed to a new cultural environment. For example:
  - Use role-plays based on real-life critical incidents, to help students identify the emotions involved and agree on steps to take when dealing with those emotions. Discuss their default (automatic) reactions and suggest appropriate actions such as talking to someone, finding an activity they enjoy, taking extra language lessons, resting as much as possible, finding a quiet time if circumstances allow, etc.
  - Post three signs—comfort zone, learning zone, panic zone—around the room. Ask students to move to the sign that best describes how they feel in every
situation you mention. Then read out loud a list of situations like: at school, meeting new people, trying new food, hanging out with other exchange students, visiting my host family relatives, etc. Discuss after each situation. Then group students to discuss possible strategies they can use to stay in the learning zone and avoid/or come back from the panic zone.

2 Personal: Creative thinking

- To view ordinary things, events, and values from a fresh perspective so they are able to generate innovative ideas and solutions.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

- Invite students to share what they consider to be the most unusual situation (critical incident) they have observed so far and then use D.I.V.E. model to analyze it (see Resources). Encourage students to come up with as many interpretations as possible and have a cultural informant available for verification. (Please see “What are Critical Incidents” box in the pre-departure orientation for an explanation of this term.)

3 Personal: Critical thinking

- To look beyond superficial appearances and to be skeptical of stereotypes.
- To form their own opinions based on recognizing that there are different ways to view things, more than one source of information, and more than one solution to a problem.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Ask students to sit in a circle and provide them with pens and paper. Place any object in the middle (it should be something that is different depending on where you look at it from). Then ask students to silently draw what they see. Once finished, students share their drawings and discuss:
  - How did you find the task?
  - What is the difference between the drawings?
  - How is it possible that people can draw the same object so many ways?
  - What does it tell us about perceptions?
  - What have you learned from this activity?
  - How can you apply this to your intercultural experience?
- Have students share their previously held stereotypes and what they now recognize as inaccurate assumptions about the host culture. Ask them to show how they would disprove that stereotype now. This is a good link to
introduce some generalizations like value dimensions and communication styles. (See What Every AFSer Should Know About Intercultural Learning 2.0 in the ICL Library at iclibrary.afs.org for more information about these concepts.)

4 Personal: Motivation and self-confidence

• To be comfortable and eager to pursue new learning situations.
• To be comfortable seeking support and receiving constructive criticism.
• To feel confident in their own abilities, to have a strong sense of self-worth and to be self-reliant.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

• Allow students to share their success stories first to start on a positive note. Be sure to provide positive feedback and encouragement.

• Ask students to share:
  - What did you learn?
  - How can you apply that learning to future challenges?
  - What challenges have you experienced so far?
  - How did you handle them?
  - Have you asked for help?
  - If you did not, why not?
  - What can you do to get more support?
  - If you did, was the help what you expected?
  - If it wasn’t, how did your expectations differ from the support you received?
  - What can be done to improve that?

5 Defining self in terms of ideals and values

• To develop personal goals in terms of academic knowledge and skills, character building, family interaction, etc.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

• Ask the students to recall the expectations and goals that they set at the arrival orientation. Have students compare those expectations and goals against their current reality, allowing them to evaluate how relevant those initial goals still are and what they can do to work towards achieving them.
As students have a more “real” perspective about their experience, they might feel like re-establishing their goals for their time in the host culture.

**6 Interpersonal: Empathy**

- To listen and be mindful of the needs of other people and to use different perspectives in approaching problems and everyday situations.
- To have a deeper concern for and sensitivity to others and expand their capacity to perceive and respond to the values, feelings, and realities of others.
- To be able to manage disagreements with others effectively and respectfully.

**STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

- Conduct activities that help students better understand their host family and friends’ points of view in several everyday issues (such as the role of children/elders in the family, religious engagement, the value of education, national policies on immigration, etc.).
- Facilitate discussions about disagreements students have been involved in during their exchange:
  - *How did you deal with it?*
  - *How did the other party deal with it?*
  - *Were there any differences?*
  - *What can you learn from it for future similar situations?*

**8 Interpersonal: Communication Skills**

- To develop skills in listening actively and thoughtfully and to respond with respect for the other person.

**STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

- Conduct activities that further develop students’ active listening skills. For example:
  - In pairs standing back to back, one student describes a drawing/image for the other person to draw without asking questions. In a second step they are allowed to ask questions during the activity. At the end they compare the two drawings (one where they could ask questions and one where they could not). Debrief to discuss one-way versus two-way communication, effective communication tips, etc.
• Please note: Effective listening skills is the ability to actively understand information provided by the speaker and display interest in the topic discussed. It also includes asking appropriate and relevant questions so the speaker knows the message is being understood.

9 Interpersonal: Commitment to others and contributing to the group

• To contribute actively and positively in school, community and family life.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

• Ask students to fill in the “Being Part of My Local Community” chart (see Resources) and discuss:
  - Do you feel you are doing enough in each area?
  - What else can you do?
  - What chores can you help with around the house?
  - Are there clubs, associations, after-school classes you can join?

• Encourage students to make greater efforts in becoming part of the family, community and school as a way of enhancing their learning opportunities.

11 Cultural: Knowledge and awareness

• To become more aware of their own culture and recognize its influence on their behavior and attitudes.

• To learn about and understand the institutions, customs, traditions, practices and current issues in the host country, and to understand the values, attitudes and behaviors.

• To describe the complexity and richness of both their home and host cultures and be able to discuss cultures without stereotyping or making judgmental statements.

• To understand the concepts of “culture” and intercultural adaptation.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

• Build an iceberg of the host culture: Before you meet, ask students to identify an object that represents the host culture for them. Have each student bring the object or a picture of it to the orientation and explain how they think it represents the host culture. Draw the image of an iceberg on a flip chart sheet or whiteboard and add all the objects on the tip above the water. Remind students that what is easily visible represents only 10% of their host culture. Facilitate a discussion around the values and beliefs that those objects represent and add them to the iceberg. (90% of culture is not easily seen and
therefore represented as the part of the iceberg that is under water.)

- **Please note:** Students should have learned about the iceberg concept of culture (and others) at the pre-departure orientation. If needed, review it briefly. (Go to the ICL Library at [iclibrary.afs.org](http://iclibrary.afs.org) for Concepts and Theories of Culture for AFS & Friends.)

- Introduce different communication styles (high/low context, direct/indirect) and value dimensions (individualism/collectivism, power distance) by examining critical incidents (ask students to share or have pre-defined examples) and/or role-play. (See examples of Communication Styles below. Review *What Every AFSer Should Know About Intercultural Learning 2.0* in the ICL Library at [iclibrary.afs.org](http://iclibrary.afs.org) for more information on communication styles.)

### Cultural: Intercultural effectiveness

- To recognize cultural differences and to adapt their behavior and perception according to the cultural context.

- To reduce intercultural anxiety concerning exposure to new people, social situations and cultural norms.

#### STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Building upon previous learning sessions, help students cope positively and adapt their behavior to the new environment. For example:
  - Invite students to identify the differences and similarities between cultures and point out some values involved in those differences. Then, have them share the ways they have been navigating those differences so far: suspending judgment, finding common ground, being curious, etc. This is a good way to build on after using the D.I.V.E. model.

### Global: Commitment to contributing to the world community

- To be willing and ready to work with others to help build peace, to improve world conditions and to commit to actions that will bring about a just and peaceful world.

- To engage in voluntary service toward the improvement of the local and global communities.

#### STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Provide opportunities for students to engage in local volunteer service or other sustainability projects. As it is still early into the program, students might feel more comfortable taking part in activities organized by the local AFS chapter while they gain in motivation and confidence to take on their
own projects in the second half of the program.

- **Please note**: Although the students will start getting involved in volunteer activities after the post-arrival orientation, addressing this at the beginning of the stay gets them thinking about what they may want to do. Also, volunteering will be encouraged by the support volunteer during the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections.

- See *ACTIVE Manual of Activities* for relevant activities to be used during the post-arrival orientation. You can find the manual at afsactivecitizens.org.

**Communication Styles**

![Communication Styles Diagram](image-url)
Mid-Stay Orientation

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The mid-stay orientation should occur midway or near the middle of the students’ intercultural journey. This event helps them take stock of what they have learned so far. As students’ local language abilities and knowledge of the host culture improve, this is an opportunity to help them further explore how to develop their intercultural effectiveness.

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND ACTIVITIES:

Personal: Self-awareness

- To become more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture.
- To learn how to manage their internal moods, emotions and impulses, and to use their inner resources to handle stress and ambiguity and to show patience with other people who are in learning situations.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Discuss deeper issues like intercultural conflict styles and review Intercultural Conflict Styles for AFS & Friends with students (in ICLibrary at iclibrary.afs.org). This will help them better understand how people in different cultures manage conflicts, which should help them better navigate their host country. For example:
  - Ask students to share some of the conflicts they have been through so far.
  - How did different parties involved in the conflict deal with it?
  - What styles can you identify? How can you bridge the gap between your style and that one of the other party?

Interpersonal: Flexibility and social skills

- To adjust to changing social circumstances and show greater flexibility in adjusting to new people, social situations and cultural norms.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Using visual methods, allow students to share success stories and challenges they have encountered so far in interacting with their new friends, family and classmates. Just as with setting/reviewing expectations, this activity can be done at every orientation after the arrival orientation since students will constantly go through new experiences and develop new skills and attitudes as the program progresses. Examples include:
- Create a “graffiti” wall (a blank large sheet of paper) for everyone to write or draw their positive and challenging experiences in their new country.
- Work together to identify what skills and attitudes were useful in turning experiences into success stories.
- For the challenges part, have students work in pairs to brainstorm possible coping strategies using the “Situation, Options, and Consequences” method to structure ideas (in Resources).

8 Interpersonal: Communication skills

- To express themselves easily both verbally and non-verbally.
- To speak with confidence in front of large groups.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Have students prepare and practice a presentation to share their experiences at school, local community groups, local places of worship, etc.
- Brainstorm places where they can deliver the presentation and help them come up with a plan and commitment to do so.

9 Interpersonal: Commitment to others and contributing to the group

- To engage with others in a spirit of cooperation, with respect and appreciation for their goals and decisions.
- To contribute actively and positively in school, community and family life.
- To be worthy of and to inspire trust.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Help students self-assess their experiences and set the goals for the second half of the exchange. For example:
  - Have the students conduct a self-assessment against the personal learning project they designed at pre-departure, arrival and post-arrival.
  - Invite students to fill out the “Wheel of Experience,” (see next page) scoring themselves on a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high) in areas such as language learning, family life adjustment, developing friends, school performance, health, etc.
  - Debrief and discuss ways of improving in each area.
Wheel of Experience

- In pairs, ask students to spend 5-10 minutes discussing:
  - What does it mean for you to show respect, and what does it mean for you to be shown respect?
- Then debrief around how the concept of respect is different for everyone and is culturally biased. Help students reflect on how respect is shown in the host culture.

13 Cultural: Knowledge and awareness

- To learn about and understand the institutions, customs, traditions, practices and current issues in the host country, and to understand the values, attitudes and behaviors.
- To describe the complexity and richness of both their home and host cultures and be able to discuss cultures without stereotyping or making judgmental statements.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Build on intercultural concepts discussed in previous orientations around value dimensions and communication styles with activities to help students
have a richer understanding of cultural differences. For example:

- Ask students to provide examples related to the value dimensions and communication styles they have previously learned about.

- Help students reflect about the multidimensional hosting reality. Are there any counter examples? Which parts of the hosting reality is this applicable to (maybe it only applies to their host family or only to the general family context) and which not, etc.

- Discuss ways they have been navigating these differences so far.

• Before the orientation, have groups of students prepare a list of guiding questions to present topics such as political structures, religion, social relations, major social issues, recreation in the host culture, etc. After each presentation, encourage students to discuss the topic.

• Organize a discussion on the topic of sustainability. Ask questions such as:
  - How are waste separation and recycling done in the home and host country?
  - Do any of the host families engage in energy-saving activities and/or conversations at home?
  - How is public transport organized?
  - Based on your answers to these questions, how would you define the relationships of people with the environment in the home and host cultures? What is the same? What’s different?

**Cultural: Intercultural effectiveness**

• To recognize cultural differences and to adapt their behavior and perception according to the cultural context.

• To appreciate diversity and display tolerance and respect for people with diverse backgrounds, attitudes, opinions, lifestyles and values.

• To reduce intercultural anxiety concerning exposure to new people, social situations and cultural norms.

**STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

• Use role-plays and/or simulations asking students to consider intercultural issues that are local but may also have international dimensions, pushing them to adapt their behavior in changing circumstances as well as developing creative thinking and communications skills. For example:

  - As in earlier orientations, an intercultural simulation like “Ecotonos”, “Barnga”, “Bafa Bafa”, “Derdians”, etc., can be used for this purpose (see page 26). Check if students have participated in these in previous
orientations. If some of them have, ask them to play along.

- **Please note:** Most of these simulations can be done more than once as the dynamics and results vary across groups. “Ecotonos” is actually a really good option to do twice and compare the two experiences. Just make sure you do not repeat “Bartega” when most of the participants have already done this simulation because they would already know “the trick.”

**Global: Global understanding: appreciation of cultural interdependence**

- To understand the interdependence of the global community and have an increased awareness of the larger impact that their personal choices and actions have in other parts of the world.
- To gain in competence in understanding the causes of conflict between cultures.

**STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

- Lead a discussion on what characteristics are important for a global citizen to develop and what characteristics of a global citizen students most relate to,
- Share and discuss the 100 Years Young! AFS Youth Workshop and Symposium recommendations (available at symposium.afs.org) and what actions students can personally take based on these.

**Global: Commitment to contributing to the world community**

- To be willing and ready to work with others to help build peace, to improve world conditions and to commit to actions that will bring about a just and peaceful world.
- To engage in voluntary service toward the improvement of the local and global communities.

**STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

Based on previous orientation assignments to explore community needs and volunteer opportunities, encourage students to engage in a further or new individual or group project after the orientation.

- Have students identify sustainability issues and brainstorm ways they can help with environment, poverty, disabilities and other issues in a sustained manner. This can be related to the sustainability discussions that take place during this orientation.
- See **ACTIVE Manual of Activities** at afsactivecitizens.org for examples to be used during mid-stay orientations.
End-of-Stay Orientation

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

This orientation focuses on students reviewing their entire experience, making sure they plan for the last weeks and get ready for the challenges waiting for them back home. The end-of-stay orientation is particularly useful for discussing the changes students have undergone during their intercultural experience and preparing them for the transition ahead when returning home. At this point, they should have developed in all areas of the AFS Educational Goals, especially in the Cultural Realm (both culture-specific and culture-general), so discussions about prejudice and stereotypes can be substantial.

This orientation should also include the following sessions:

1. **Required Logistics:**
   - Provide needed information about travel arrangements for the trip back home.

2. **Personal Safety and Wellbeing:**
   - Identify positive alternatives to unhealthy or high-risk behaviors that may seem attractive,
   - Identify things that they can do to help ensure their wellbeing while in transit to the home country.

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND ACTIVITIES:

**Personal: Self-awareness**

- To become more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture.

**STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

- Focus on activities that enable students’ self-reflection on change and transition, discussing these in terms of:
  - **Change:** Have students draw “before” and “now” pictures of themselves and then discuss:
    - How have you changed over the program?
    - How do you see yourself and how do you think others see you?
  - **Transition:** Discuss change of status and circumstances that go with changing from being an exchange student to returning to being a “regular” student when back home.
Personal: Critical thinking

- To look beyond superficial appearances and to be skeptical of stereotypes.
- To form their own opinions based on recognizing that there are different ways to view things, more than one source of information, and more than one solution to a problem.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Have students share critical incidents where they initially could not understand the other party’s behavior but after some reflection can now identify the values and beliefs involved in the situation. Discuss:
  - What are these values and beliefs you are now aware of?
  - How can you use this knowledge and understanding of other cultures in the future?
  - Can you think of people or groups back home who are very different from you?
  - What do you think are their values and beliefs?
  - How can you use your experience here to better understand them?

- Engage students in activities that focus on anticipation of challenges they may encounter upon return to the home culture (in the context of transition and change). Help them work on creating and sharing of potential strategies for their resolution. For example:
  - Have students role-play previous students’ stories about challenges they faced when back home. Then debrief around positive coping strategies that were or could be used.

Cultural: Knowledge and awareness

- To learn about and understand the institutions, customs, traditions, practices and current issues in the host country, and to understand the values, attitudes and behaviors.
- To describe the complexity and richness of both their home and host cultures and be able to discuss cultures without stereotyping or making judgmental statements.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Allow students to realize the scope of their knowledge of the host culture on two levels:
  1. Observable practices and artifacts,
  2. Values and attitudes that they have experienced here.
• To do this, have students draw two icebergs (one for the host culture and one for the home culture) and fill them in with what they have learned along the journey. Instead of icebergs, they can also draw any of the models you have been using to discuss culture in previous orientations. Ask:
  - What are the main similarities and differences you see?
  - What was the most challenging part of navigating between these two cultures?
  - What were your successful ways of coping?
  - What are your main take-aways?
  - What would you do differently next time you are in a new culture?

• When conducting these activities, facilitate a discussion on the impact of stereotypes and prejudice when presenting and perceiving different cultures. Emphasize how we look at the tip of another culture’s iceberg from the values in our own iceberg, which influences our perception and creates cultural bias.

• Using the AFS Educational Goals as a guide, ask participants to assess their progress in learning against each one of them.
Cultural: Intercultural effectiveness

- To recognize cultural differences and to adapt their behavior and perception according to the cultural context.
- To reduce intercultural anxiety concerning exposure to new people, social situations and cultural norms.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Discuss the topics of “intercultural anxiety” and “intercultural competence” with the students. For example (and as a continuation of the two icebergs’ activity), ask:
  - What are the knowledge, skills and attitudes that helped you navigate the intercultural experience you have had so far?
  - Which did you feel you had before you began the program?
  - Which did you develop during your exchange?
- Students can also explore which competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) will help them in the future when encountering differences in new or different environments.
Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections
(Formerly called Monthly Contacts)

For many years, AFS has required that each student be contacted on at least a monthly basis. These monthly contacts help meet AFS’ compliance requirements (described in the AFS Standards, Policies and Procedures in the Library on AFS Global). Support volunteers also use monthly contacts to provide students with emotional support as they adapt to a new culture. The new Monthly Contact & Learning Reflection approach builds on this process by additionally giving the student (and the support volunteer) the opportunity to deepen their learning experience.

Please note: Support volunteers must be able to provide impartial, non-judgmental, trustworthy and educational support to AFS students and their host families. The relationship should be based on mutual trust, and the support volunteers should be “friendly but not friends” with the students and the families. Their role is to provide students with practical support and facilitate students’ self-reflection for them to improve their intercultural competence and the learning associated with the AFS experience.

Support volunteers are expected to deal with conflicts between students and host families, with a focus on preventing a conflict from becoming a crisis point in which neither the student nor the family can learn or cope.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

These monthly touch points present the opportunity for a series of regular learning discussions during the AFS experience. These conversations will lead the student through a series of learning-focused reflections aimed at the development of the student intercultural competencies as well as overall achievements against the AFS Educational Goals.

We recognize that each student and each support volunteer is different, and their experience and relationship will progress in different ways and at different speeds. The activities are thus broken down into four “learning focus areas” with general guidelines and topics for discussion for each area. It is for this reason that the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections section of the AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum is set up differently than the other touch points.

It is important to understand that some students may need more time to reflect and process the learning, which will require working longer in certain learning focus areas. Others may move at a faster pace and be ready for activities from a later learning focus area at an earlier stage. Support volunteers should remain thoughtful of a student’s individual style and particular situation.

Finally, it is important to know that the Monthly Contact & Learning Reflection suggestions are activity-based. In the initial phase they are designed to help the
student and the support volunteer develop a trusting relationship and begin exploring cultural differences. As the program progresses, relationship-building activities are replaced by discussions and reflections as students have more experiences to debrief. (See Debriefing Experiential Learning for AFS & Friends in the ICL Library at iclibrary.afs.org.)

Debriefing their experiences through the proposed activities will speed the students’ learning and give the support volunteer a chance to better understand the students’ progress against the AFS Educational Goals.

You will also find the Monthly Reflection Activities for the Student and Host Family handouts in the Resources. This series of activities have been designed to help students and host families get closer and learn from each other. They can do these in their own time. These activities have been designed as a bonus and something students and families can and should do on their own, on top of the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections with the support volunteer.

TIPS FOR BUILDING POSITIVE RAPPORT WITH AFS STUDENTS

The concept of rapport in the AFS context is very much related to the Interpersonal Realm of AFS Educational Goals. But rapport goes beyond the “magical chemistry” between two people. Volunteers should work to build a good relationship with the student based on trust, and with the goal of getting to know each other—trying to understand how the other person feels, and developing good communications skills. For the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections, the volunteer and student must engage in a joint learning journey.

Contact context:

• First contacts with the student are key in building rapport. This process starts with the first contact that may occur before arrival and it never ends. Rapport evolves over time and begins with understanding the student’s personal motivation to start the AFS experience.

• Consider that the way your first contact occurs will impact the rapport (e.g. approaching the student online, over the phone or in person). Remember the value of non-verbal communication and how much the tone of voice or body posture conveys. This is why an in-person meeting is the best way to build rapport.

• Start building rapport with the student as soon as possible. This is a first significant step to show your interest in connecting during the journey. A volunteer who is slow to contact the participant often starts out with a “yellow card” – contacting the participant in person during the first week is key to the establishment of rapport.

• Try to have realistic expectations about the student’s motivation. Not all of them will express goals as profound as you may like them to have.
• Try to genuinely connect on an emotional level, without judging them based on first impressions.

• Remember that as an AFS volunteer, your role is to facilitate the others’ educational process while you are working on your own intercultural competence development. This is what the concept of “the unfinished product” looks like in daily practice.

Generational differences:

• No matter how old you are and what the age difference is between you and the student, respect is a crucial basis for communication and for building rapport.

• Remember that people’s attitudes depend on many factors and that they may change over time. Reflect on and share an example of how you may have changed over time with the student. Be careful to select constructive examples, with an educational purpose. Don’t forget that educational does not mean “boring” and humor—if appropriate and well used—may contribute to your positive rapport with the student.

Being a good listener:

• Be an empathetic listener. The key for this is to listen first and acknowledge what you hear, even if you don’t agree with it, before expressing your experience or point of view. Listen to hear and understand, not to respond. If you are thinking of your response, you are not listening. Listen!

• Try to separate feelings from facts, and remember the D.I.V.E. method. (See Resources.) Recognize possible feelings and thoughts, then ask the AFS student to confirm or clarify if you perceived and understood what they were trying to communicate.

• Summarize in your own words what you understood from what the student said, and if you are not sure enough, try starting with a phrase like: “It sounds to me that you probably felt like______.” Try finishing your summary saying something like: “Is that right? Or was it different”.

• Be an empathetic listener. Using the appropriate tone of voice, body language and eye contact helps convince students that you are interested in understanding who they are and how they feel/think. Empathetic listening with the right body language helps to build trust, which requires constant maintenance.

• Don’t forget the value of non-verbal communication (including body language and eye contact), especially being mindful of possible cultural differences.

Open-ended questions:

• Questions starting with “How” and “What” will help you get deeper into a
conversation than questions leading to a yes/no answer. For example: “What do you think about this?” “How comfortable do you feel with______?” “How would you imagine yourself dealing with_______?” “How do you think you would like being supported?”

Find things in common:

• Try to identify common or similar interests, anecdotes and life experiences. Remember that your goal is to build a sense of camaraderie and trust. And keep in mind that being friendly does not mean becoming friends with the student.

Identify and validate strengths in the student:

• Validating the student’s decision to embark on an intercultural exchange is important. Be appreciative of the student and reinforce their positive traits. This step toward building rapport will help you identify potential skills to develop and work with during the student’s intercultural educational journey.

Remember names of people and things important for the student:

• Being able to remember details of the student’s life that are significant for them, shows them you care and you are genuinely interested in helping them.

• Don’t forget that rapport isn’t something you can force. Implementing some of these tips may help, but it is essential to genuinely care about the other person and to accept that we can relate even if we are different.
Distribution of 16 *AFS Educational Goals* among Monthly Contacts and Learning Reflections Focus Areas

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*Language learning is encouraged throughout the AFS experience.*
LEARNING FOCUS AREA #1

Discovering & Developing Awareness of Cultural Differences

WHEN

Learning Focus Area #1 targets the first 1-2 months after the student’s arrival. The actual timing will vary depending on the student.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

During this period, the student is settling into a new family and beginning life in a new school and community. Your early involvement with the student during this time will help establish a supportive relationship. Your goal is to develop a trusting relationship with the student for three primary reasons:

1. The student should be comfortable contacting you if there are challenges or problems.
2. You want to establish a solid foundation for your future learning partnership.
3. It is essential that both the student and their host family think of you as an experienced, supportive, knowledgeable and trustworthy person representing AFS. They should feel comfortable approaching you with questions and take your advice seriously.

The activities described in the Learning Focus Areas can help you develop a relationship with the student, and to jointly develop some observational and listening skills that will support learning in the months to come.
1st Month (Learning Focus Area #1)

ACTIVITIES FOR THE STUDENT WITH THE SUPPORT VOLUNTEER

During this time support volunteers reinforce the D.I.V.E. approach (see Resources) to intercultural encounters, which students should have been introduced to in the pre-departure orientation. We encourage you to emphasize during the D.I.V.E. process the idea of a neutral observation as part of the first stage of the D.I.V.E. model - asking the student to describe. Encourage the AFS student to simply observe, without judgment, describing what they are seeing. Often when encountering new cultures, we are quick to judge and do not take the time to objectively observe. Asking the student to simply and as objectively as possible describe what is being observed without judgment can help make the D.I.V.E. strategy be more effective. We suggest that the Monthly Contact & Learning Reflection happens twice in the first month of the experience only.

Week 1

During your first visit with the student, after introductions and getting to know each other, use the D.I.V.E. model to conduct the “Community Observation” activity:

• Take the student to a place where people gather in the community, such as a park, square, commercial street, mall, etc.
• Spend time together with the student observing people and interactions.
• Ask the student to describe what they see, interpreting things such as relationships, communication styles etc.
• Verify from your knowledge of the local culture and help student understand the underlying cultural values and beliefs for certain interactions.
• Then ask the student to evaluate the situation. How does this interpretation of things make them feel? Do they have negative or positive reactions to it? How can this reaction potentially affect their experience in the host culture? What else do they think they need to learn more about?

HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY ACTIVITY

Give both the student and host family Monthly Reflection Activities Handout 1 “Starting Life as a Family” (in Resources) to do together as soon as possible. Discussing this list of questions about household rules, safety, etc. will help set some realistic expectations for both parties.

Please note: The host families should have received the handout titled “Starting Life as a Family” during their pre-arrival orientation.
**Please note:** If the student changes host families during the exchange, make sure they do this activity again. Then help them reflect afterward about the differences between families.

**Week 4**

Use the D.I.V.E. model to conduct the “Mapping My Homes” activity with the student:

- Ask the student to draw a rough map or blueprint of their homes in their home country and host country. At the same time, draw a blueprint of your own home with the student.
- Ask the student to describe where various daily functions happen back home and in the host home: meals, watching TV, studying, family gathering, etc.
- Once the student describes the differences they have observed, lead a discussion to help move into the interpretation of what goes on at home.
- As the “cultural informant” for the local culture, verify some of the student’s interpretations by describing your own home in comparison to the student’s host home.
- Use this opportunity to look at what differences are “cultural” and what are “personal” and help the student better understand the different levels of influence that culture, personality and human nature have on one’s behaviors.
- Encourage the student to remain curious and observant of the new culture and experiences throughout the exchange.

**HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY ACTIVITY**

Give both the student and the host family the Monthly Reflection Activities Handout 2 “Cultural and Family Heritage Discussion Guide” (in Resources) with instructions on the cultural and family heritage shared activity.

**Please note:** If the student changes host families during the exchange, make sure they do this activity again. Then help them reflect afterward about the differences between families.
2nd Month (Learning Focus Area #1)

ACTIVITIES FOR THE STUDENT WITH THE SUPPORT VOLUNTEER

1. Hold a “Discovering Family Life” discussion with the student:

Ask the student to talk about what they have observed as similarities and differences in the family life back at home and in the host family.

- What are the relationships of parents and children like?
- Who makes rules?
- How does the family spend time together?
- What activities does the family do together?
- How do the meals work?

2. Use the D.I.V.E model to conduct the “Mapping My School” activity with the student:

Ask the student to talk about what similarities and differences they have seen between their home school and host school, repeating the “Mapping My Homes” activity, but focusing on the schools this time. Remember that physical layout can have a big impact on the school experience and can reveal things about the culture. Ask questions such as:

- How is the school life organized?
- How much homework do students normally get? What type of homework do students usually get?
- What is the relationship between students and teachers like?
- What happens when a teacher enters the room?
- How are teachers addressed?
- Does the communication between students and teachers go beyond school hours?

Discuss the school experience with the student especially if they talk about challenges at school. Ask questions such as:

- What are the attitudes toward students studying together?
- Is there a difference in what is perceived as “cheating” in the two cultures?
- What differences are there in how grades are assigned? What values does this seem to reflect?

HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY ACTIVITY:

Give both the student and the host family the Monthly Reflection Activities Handout 3 “Values and Behaviors” (in Resources) with instructions to do the values and behaviors exercise together.
LEARNING FOCUS AREA #2

Deepening Skills and Understanding

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Now that you have developed a solid relationship with the student, you can begin to focus on helping them make more sense of the intercultural experience and develop skills and attitudes needed to adapt to their new environment. Our suggestions for discussion topics focus on deepening the understanding of family, friendships and school issues and how these relate to the intercultural learning elements of the exchange program. You may need to help the student consider how to build friendships. We encourage you to help them take a step back from challenges they may have experienced and to do some critical and creative thinking about the issues. This is also a time to help the student develop flexibility in order to manage possible conflicts, in particular helping them think about how to talk to host families, friends and teachers about daily experiences as well as challenges or problems.
3rd Month (Learning Focus Area #2)

ACTIVITIES FOR THE STUDENT WITH THE SUPPORT VOLUNTEER

Work on conflict resolution strategies for use within the family:

• Ask the student about their usual ways of dealing with conflict within their home culture as a starting point in the conversation:
  - What are the most difficult situations you went through? How did you deal with them?
  - What are the coping strategies (methods used to dealing with stressful situations) you have most commonly used to deal with difficult situations in the past?

• There are multiple topics related to conflict resolution that can be discussed, which should also incorporate the D.I.V.E. model. Discuss questions like these:
  - What differences do you see in the expectations of your host parents versus the expectations of your parents back home? What cultural differences might help you interpret or understand these differences better?
  - How can you check to see what is cultural versus what is personal?
  - What makes you think your host family is upset? What actions have you taken so far that seemed to upset your host parents? Do you understand why they were upset? What communication issues might be involved? How would your parents at home have responded?
  - When did you have a feeling that something didn’t go right and you didn’t know why? What did you observe? Describe the situation, interpret what happened. How can you verify this? How did you evaluate the situation then? How do you evaluate it now?

• Most of these questions have a strong connection to cultural values, which you should be ready to discuss and/or introduce in the conversation.

HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY ACTIVITY

Ask both the student and the host family to review the Monthly Reflection Activities Handout 1 “Starting Life as a Family” activity (in Resources) they did right after arrival and discuss these questions:

- Were these conversations useful for discovering family life?
- What else have you learned since then about the functioning of the household?
- Are there new things we need to ask or explain?
4th Month (Learning Focus Area #2)

ACTIVITIES FOR THE STUDENT WITH THE SUPPORT VOLUNTEER

Support the student’s efforts to build relationships and explore the concept of friendship in a new culture:

• Ask the student to reflect on how they are connecting interpersonally:
  - How are you going about getting new friends here?
  - What are the closest relationships you have developed in your host community?
  - How do you nurture those relationships?
  - What are you doing to try and meet new people?

• Encourage the student to get to know a new person or make an extra effort to get to know someone better every week and then discuss it in your monthly meeting using some of these questions:
  - What do you have in common with the new people you have met?
  - What was the most interesting thing about that person?
  - What are the main personal and cultural differences between you?
  - Do you think this person is a “typical” representative of the host culture? In which ways yes, in which ways not?

• Explore the differences and similarities the student perceives in the concept of friendship:
  - What are your perceptions about the difference in the meaning of “friend” between your home and your host culture?
  - What are the main differences and similarities?
  - Does one culture seem to differentiate more between the idea of an “acquaintance” and a “friend?”
  - What language is used with your new friends?

HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY ACTIVITY

Give both the student and host family the Monthly Reflection Activities Handout 4 “Non-Verbal Communication” (in Resources) with instructions to do a non-verbal communication activity together.
5th Month (Learning Focus Area #2)

ACTIVITIES FOR THE STUDENT WITH THE SUPPORT VOLUNTEER

Help the student understand and expand their portfolio of communication styles (see more in post-arrival orientation). Continue exploring differences in communications styles (such as direct vs. indirect, circular vs. linear, etc.) with the student.

Guide the discussion on communication styles with questions such as these:

- What does the word “yes” mean in your home culture? What does the word “yes” mean in your host culture? How is this different?
- What are common topics of conversation back home? What are common topics of conversation in the host community? Do you notice a difference in what topics are “safe” in the home versus host culture? For example, are there topics that you would not discuss unless you know the person well?
- Did you discuss non-verbal communication with your host family last month? What did you learn from it?

Please note: If the student has not done the activity with the host family, go through the questions with them.

HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY ACTIVITY

Give both the student and host family the Monthly Reflection Activities Handout 5 “Communication Styles and Time orientation” (in Resources) with instructions to do an exercise together.
LEARNING FOCUS AREA #3
The Intercultural Self in the World

WHEN
Beginning about halfway through the student’s experience and extending up until the last month of the experience.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES
Ideally, the student is now well adjusted and much more competent with local language skills. While much work has been done in the personal realm in the earlier stages of the program, the discussion topics and activities for this time period are aimed to help the student think more about themselves within their new cultural and the greater global context and create consciousness of what they are learning through the AFS program.

Our goal is that they will begin to identify the values, skills and behaviors they brought with them from the home culture and the newly acquired skills and learning that has happened as a result of their experience in the host culture. This is also a time to help the student begin to further develop a sense of self as a global citizen and how their learning through AFS enriches them.

Involvement in volunteer work, local community service projects or similar activities can provide a relevant and meaningful experience to debrief, helping the student think about and begin to act on issues such as hunger, homelessness, education, the environment, etc. that have both local and global dimensions. Such activities provide a chance to look at how cultures address these issues and help the student learn and formulate their approach to taking action. The orientations taking place during this time also encourage student engagement in activities such as these, either together with local AFS volunteers, fellow AFS students, others in the community or family or even on their own.

It is also important to help the student look at how they are expressing appreciation to the host family, school, etc. for the opportunities provided them.

Finally, some of the activities below ask the student to look back and reflect about how to make the experience moving forward even better.
6th Month (Learning Focus Area #3)

ACTIVITIES FOR THE STUDENT WITH THE SUPPORT VOLUNTEER

Work with the student on “Showing Emotions” in a new environment in ways that are culturally appropriate yet authentic.

By this point in the experience, students have already had the chance to notice the differences in the way people show emotions, affection and love for each other.

- As a hands-on reflection activity, refer to the “Cultural Values and Dimensions” chapter in What Every AFser Should Know about Intercultural Learning 2.0. Use the tables provided in the chapter to identify where the student’s home and host cultures fall on the different “cultural” continuums to facilitate this discussion. Showing emotions may be linked to different dimensions in one culture—such as indulgence vs. restraint, small vs. large power distance, masculinity vs. femininity and others. Support volunteers must study and understand these different dimensions to adequately explain them to the student and help them think through these concepts.

(A Please note: What Every AFser Should Know about Intercultural Learning 2.0 is in the ICL Library at iclibrary.afs.org.)

A key element in intercultural learning requires that students understand differences such as those suggested in the “Cultural Values and Dimensions” chapter—and be able to adapt their behavior to the local ways without losing a sense of who they are. Adapting to a different way of expressing emotions is one of the most difficult aspects of intercultural adaptation that can be challenging for many AFS students spending their experience in a different culture.

- Some reflection questions might include:
  - What are the main differences between your home culture and host culture in terms of expressing love and affection? Why do you think such differences exist?
  - Do you feel comfortable with the way others express their emotions to you here? What can you do to feel more comfortable? What are some of the challenges you have faced?

HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY ACTIVITY

From this point until the final month, ask both the student and host family to discuss these three questions together every month:

- What was everyone’s highlight of the month?
- What was everyone’s main challenge?
- How can we support each other with the challenges?
7th Month (Learning Focus Area #3)

ACTIVITIES FOR THE STUDENT WITH THE SUPPORT VOLUNTEER

Help the student develop as a global citizen by encouraging them to volunteer locally:

• Advise the student to engage in a local volunteer or service project. Use this involvement as an opportunity for a structured debriefing discussion, which helps the student learn and think about themselves as a global citizen with multiple value systems. You may also want to join the student in the local community service project.

• When choosing a project or activity, discuss the selection process with the student:
  - What local issue attracted you to this project?
  - What sort of global issues have you observed to be linked to this local project?
  - Which one of them caught your attention and concern most?
  - In what areas do you think you can better contribute and make a positive difference?

• These are some of the questions you may want to discuss with the student about their community service experience:
  - What does the community service experience reveal to you about related values in both the home and host culture?
  - Are there multiple perspectives on the issue?

HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY ACTIVITY

Ask both the student and the host family again to discuss these three questions:

- What was everyone’s highlight of the month?
- What was everyone’s main challenge?
- How can we better support each other through the challenges?
8th Month (Learning Focus Area #3)

ACTIVITIES FOR THE STUDENT WITH THE SUPPORT VOLUNTEER

Work with the student to **show appreciation** in the host community:

- If we think of culture as an iceberg, showing appreciation can be both above the waterline (as a type of behavior) and below the waterline (when representing a value). Once the student has been in the host country for a number of months, it is good to discuss how appreciation is expressed:
  - *Is the host culture mostly verbal? What are the non-verbal appreciation cues in the host culture?*
  - *How are these the same and how are they different between the home and host cultures?*

**Please note:** The student should have already learned about the iceberg model of culture in pre-departure communications and/or orientation. If not, please refer to pre-departure orientation Session for information about the iceberg model.

- Discuss the culturally appropriate way of expressing appreciation with the student:
  - *How do people show appreciation in your host culture? Is this different than your home culture?*
  - *How can you express your appreciation for your family, school, friends, AFS volunteers, other people in the community?*

When you discuss showing appreciation, make sure to address the differences between values and behaviors regarding appreciation.

In some cultures, it might be appropriate to express appreciation at a party or gathering. Use this or another culturally appropriate way to help the student actively express appreciation to the host family, friends, teachers or other people who have had a good impact on the student’s experience.

- If you are helping the student organize an event, discuss the typical ways to plan and throw a party in the home and host cultures. This is a chance for the student to actively demonstrate cultural learning, in this case about methods of appreciation from home culture as well as in the host culture and also to thank their host community:
  - *What do you think expectations are in terms of time things start/end? Invitations? Food/drinks served? Other ways to show appreciation?*
HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY ACTIVITY

Ask both the student and the host family again to discuss these three questions:

- What was everyone’s highlight of the month?
- What was everyone’s main challenge?
- How can we better support each other through the challenges?
LEARNING FOCUS AREA #4

Preparing for the Return to the Home Culture

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

At this point in the experience, students often experience many conflicting emotions. Their excitement about returning home may be tempered by the sorrow of saying good-bye to host family and friends and possibly to aspects of the new culture to which they have adapted.

At around this time, students will attend the end-of-stay orientation where they will review their whole experience, planning for the last few weeks in the host country (including thanking important people during their experience) and reflecting about possible challenges when going back home. These monthly learning reflections are an opportunity to enhance this process and go deeper into the student’s individual experience.

This is also the time to begin preparing the student to return to their home culture. Ideally, these Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections will help them to think about the whole AFS experience deeply and identify what they have gained and learned during their sojourn. At the same time, you can help the students examine the skills and tools they have developed and used, and think about how to use these skills and tools as they return home, especially but not only for their initial re-adjustment.

Encourage the student to get involved with AFS as an alumnus or returnee after their return home, to join a support network of people who have had similar experiences. They can do this by becoming an AFS volunteer.

Finally, be sure to point out that what is learned through the AFS exchange experience is also the beginning of a lifelong learning adventure and that the same skills and tools that helped them first adjust to the host culture will help them re-adjust to the home culture. These can and should also be applied outside of the AFS context in the student’s everyday personal, academic and professional life.
9th Month (Learning Focus Area #4)

ACTIVITIES FOR THE SUPPORT VOLUNTEER AND STUDENT

Help the student prepare to report back and articulate or share in meaningful terms the growth they have experienced. Discuss with the student about what they would tell someone from the home culture about the host culture:

- What were the main challenges you faced in adapting to the host culture?
- What were some of the most surprising cultural differences you discovered?
- What are the differences in values? In communication styles? In the sense of time?
- What were the diverse examples of people you have met? To what extent did they conform or contradict your general opinion about the host culture?
- What suggestions would you give to someone from your home culture entering the host culture for the first time?
- What advice do you have for future AFSers or local host families and schools?
- Based on how you understand the AFS experience, who in this community do you think would be a good host family? Why?

HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY ACTIVITY

Ask both the student and the host family again to discuss these three questions:

- What was everyone’s highlight of the month?
- What was everyone’s main challenge?
- How can we better support each other through the challenges?
10th Month (Learning Focus Area #4)

ACTIVITIES FOR THE SUPPORT VOLUNTEER AND STUDENT

Reflecting on the New Self

- By now, many students will have identified aspects of the new culture that may be particularly satisfying to them. They may have also identified aspects of the host family that they enjoyed or may not exist at home. These are important points of discussion:
  - What differences in yourself are important for you to take home? How will your family and friends perceive those differences? How will those differences be perceived in general in the home culture?
  - What are things you have learned which may help you in your adjustment back home?
  - What resources do you have back home? How might involvement with AFS in your home country help you?

- Help students identify personal strengths and weaknesses during the experience:
  - How did you surprise yourself?
  - What new skills did you discover?
  - What personal areas do you need to keep working on when you go back home? How do you plan to do that?

HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY ACTIVITY

Ask both the student and the host family to discuss these final reflection questions:

- What was the highlight of our time together? Does anyone remember the funniest story?
- What were the main challenges?
- What did we learn during this time together?
- What did you do that made you proud? (Each person must answer.)
- What did you do that you wish you did differently? (Each person must answer.)
Welcome Back Messaging

EXPECTED OUTCOMES
Sending Partners send welcome back messages to students when they begin preparing to go home. Contacts during their transition back to their home country should be compelling, engaging and encouraging. They should also include all the necessary logistical information about their return, recognize their new, deeper cultural knowledge and express appreciation for the long journey of self-discovery they have experienced.

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS FOR STUDENTS:

Personal: Motivation and self-confidence
- To be comfortable seeking support and receiving constructive criticism.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS
- Let students know that AFS is looking forward to having them back.
- Provide contact information in case they want to get in touch with AFS right after they come back home.
- Provide more information about the re-entry orientation (including tentative dates if possible), which will take place after their return. Assure students that volunteers and staff will be ready to provide support once they are back home.

Cultural: Knowledge and awareness
- To understand the concepts of “culture” and intercultural adaptation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS
- Introduce the basics of re-entry adaptation, for example by mentioning that it might be as difficult to come back home as it was going abroad or explaining that the “familiar” can seem suddenly different and many things might have changed.
- Encourage students to begin actively reflecting on what is going on around them. This is essential for their transition back into the home culture.
AFTER the AFS Intercultural Experience

Preparing students to transition back home and begin their lives as global citizens

This section contains activities to address *AFS Educational Goals* for:

- Re-Entry Messaging
- Re-Entry Orientation
- Volunteer Recruitment
AFTER the AFS Intercultural Experience

Preparing students to transition back home and begin their lives as global citizens

The learning journey of AFS students does not stop at the end of their intercultural exchange. This “final” stage of the intercultural discovery is in some ways actually the beginning a life-long reflection on the experience and their life as a global citizen. It is now that students will begin to look back on the time spent in another culture, summarize their experiences and start to apply what they have learned through AFS for their personal, academic and professional futures.

Re-entry messages and orientation should help the student consolidate their learning on all levels of AFS Educational Goals, and help them successfully transition back into the home culture.

This part of the learning journey is also crucial for volunteer recruitment and engagement. It is a stepping-stone for life-long learning and participation in the AFS family.
Re-Entry Messaging

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The Sending Partner letter should include an engaging and exciting message to students, welcoming them back home and providing details for re-entry orientation and other opportunities to continue their intercultural AFS experience. This message is another opportunity to review and emphasize the AFS Educational Goals to the students and their parents.

AFS volunteers and staff members should support the students’ re-entry by encouraging them to reflect on their exchange experience and to attend the re-entry orientation. They should also include sending parents in the re-entry communications in order to provide tips and guidance on family support for students who are returning home.

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS FOR ALUMNI:

1 Personal: Self-awareness

- To become more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS

- Send messages to students that explain how the educational benefits they gained from the program (e.g. language skills) will influence their future life and decisions such as career choice. For example:
  - Share a summary of the AFS Long Term Impact Study. (This document is available in the ICL Library at iclibrary.afs.org)
  - Send photos and quotes of famous AFS returnees from their home country.
- Invite returnees to provide feedback about their intercultural experience through the AFS Customer Service Evaluation or other means your organization sets up for this purpose.

11 Cultural: Knowledge and awareness

- To understand the concept of culture and intercultural adaptation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTNERS

- Urge students to reflect on the changes they may have personally experienced by asking questions such as:
- What are the main changes I have experienced during the program?
- How has this experience changed the way I see the world?

• Help the students understand the cultural adjustment processes using the Cultural Adaptation Models for AFS & Friends (see ICL Library at iclibrary.afs.org) and how coming back home might be as hard as their first weeks in the new culture. Encourage students to be patient and take time to re-adjust.
Re-Entry Orientation

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

This orientation helps students reflect on their whole experience and connect what they learned and how they’ve changed to their future goals and dreams. This is an essential event for debriefing the students about their intercultural journey. Volunteers should check in with students to see what impact the exchange had on their self-awareness and values. Re-entry is also useful helping students identify ways to put their global awareness and intercultural skills to work in their local community.

This orientation should also include the following session:

1. **Personal Safety and Wellbeing:**
   
   - Understand the role that re-entry adjustment may play in any health concerns (weight gain or loss, sleep issues, digestion problems).

**AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS FOR STUDENT ALUMNI:**

**Personal: Self-awareness**

- To become more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture.

**ALUMNI ACTIVITIES**

- Engage students in activities that help them reflect on their journey abroad. For example:
  
  - Ask students to draw a line that reflects the ups and down of their AFS experience from the time they applied to now and then discuss this with others.

- Conduct activities that help students identify how the host culture influenced their current view of life. For example, ask questions like:
  
  - *What are the main values, beliefs and/or behaviors you observed in the host culture that you would like to embrace back home?*

  - *How has the host culture affected the way you see things now?*
Map your ups and downs with a line

3 Personal: Critical thinking
   • To form their own opinions based on recognizing that there are different ways to view things, more than one source of information, and more than one solution to a problem.

ALUMNI ACTIVITIES
   • Have students share the most difficult situation they went through while on the exchange program. Ask them to present the story as objectively as they can, from the perspectives of all parties involved.
   • Please note: Even though this was done during their time abroad, this is a good opportunity for the students to have a deeper reflection in their own language and with some distance from those events.
     - Use the D.I.V.E. model activity (see Resources) to help students debrief what they experienced.

4 Personal: Motivation and self-confidence
   • To be comfortable seeking support and receiving constructive criticism.
   • To feel confident in their own abilities, to have a strong sense of self-worth and to be self-reliant.

ALUMNI ACTIVITIES
   • Invite students to reflect on how they typically asked for support during their intercultural experience. If they did not seek help, encourage them to think why and how doing so might have helped them to deal with difficult situations.
• Ask students to identify what they learned during their intercultural experience. For example:
  - Circulate or post big blank flip chart sheets with different titles (e.g. home culture, host family, youth in the host culture, host school, host community, etc.).
  - Ask students to list as many things as they learned for each one of these categories.
  - The end result of this activity will give students a sense of pride and will help them realize how much they have learned.

• Engage students in a reflection about the skills and knowledge they gained during the AFS program and how they can use them in the future. As a continuation of the activity above, students can focus on what they learned about themselves. For example:
  - Use a visual, such as a tree, where students can add sticky notes in different sections. Instruct students to think of the roots to represent what they already had in them, the trunk for the skills and abilities they strengthened during their exchange program and the leaves for the new skills, knowledge and abilities they gained.

An example of using a tree to help students visualize their skills and knowledge.
• Help students reflect about their current strengths and weaknesses by using an AFS experience SWOT analysis, as they did during the pre-departure orientation.

• As a way of helping students effectively share their learning journey, help them design and practice short speeches and presentations about their experience that they would do during a college application, a TV show, a job interview, etc.

5 **Personal: Defining self in terms of ideals and values**

• To develop personal goals in terms of academic knowledge and skills, character building, family interaction, etc.

• To define and value themselves in terms of ideals and goals rather than material worth and to resist peer pressure that belittles the value of other individuals or groups.

**ALUMNI ACTIVITIES**

• After reflecting on everything they learned and who they are now, invite students to think about the future:
  - *Where will you go from here?*

• Help students set goals for the short and long term.

• Facilitate activities to help students compare what was of value for them before the experience and what is valuable now. For this activity you could use flash cards with different values: ask the students to arrange them from the most important to the least important ones before and after the AFS experience.

• Check with students if they discussed these topics at their arrival orientation in the host country and if they see any differences and learning outcomes over time.

13 **Cultural: Intercultural effectiveness**

• To appreciate diversity and display tolerance and respect for people with diverse backgrounds, attitudes, opinions, lifestyles and values.
ALUMNI ACTIVITIES

- Invite students to present their experience to future applicants and their families, if asked by their AFS Partner office.

- Building upon the activity they did during their post-arrival orientation, have students bring something that represents their host culture and invite them to share more about it with others:
  - Why is that representative of the culture? What values does that represent?
  - As a twist on the earlier version of this activity, guide students to show respect and appreciation of diversity when sharing. For example, ask students to present their host culture as an ambassador of that country.

Global: Global understanding

- To understand the interdependence of the global community and have an increased awareness of the larger impact that their personal choices and actions have in other parts of the world.

- To gain in competence in understanding the causes of conflict between cultures.

ALUMNI ACTIVITIES

- Create assignments to help students reflect on the interdependence of the global community regarding topics such as environment, poverty, etc. For example:
  - Organize a debate to explore topics such as environmental issues, climate change and armed conflicts around the world.

Global: Commitment to contributing to the world community

- To be willing and ready to work with others to help build peace, to improve world conditions and to commit to actions that will bring about a just and peaceful world.

- To engage in voluntary service toward the improvement of the local and global communities.

ALUMNI ACTIVITIES

- Invite students who returned from the program to check out social impact initiatives by their local AFS volunteers and other active citizens and changemakers.
• Invite newly returned students to work alongside hosted students in community-focused projects.

• Engage students in the local AFS chapter. Mentor them to help them identify a suitable role for them to take on.

• See the *ACTIVE Manual of Activities* (at afsactivecitizens.org) for some good practices examples to do during re-entry orientations.
Recruiting Students to Become AFS Volunteers

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

AFS volunteers are the driving force of our organization. More than 50,000 volunteers support AFS programs and participate in social impact initiatives in more than 100 countries. Recruiting students to become AFS volunteers helps them to further develop their cultural knowledge, attitudes and awareness along the AFS Educational Goals, while also contributing to the development of the local AFS organization and helping provide opportunities for other people to have an AFS experience. Current volunteers and staff should emphasize that the AFS Student Learning Journey can last a lifetime, and volunteering is a perfect opportunity for students to improve and practice their intercultural and interpersonal skills regularly, plus contribute to the global community.

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS FOR STUDENT ALUMNI:

4 Personal: Motivation and self-confidence
• To be comfortable seeking support and receiving constructive criticism.
• To feel confident in their own abilities, to have a strong sense of self-worth and to be self-reliant.

ALUMNI ACTIVITIES
• Conduct activities that explain the concept of lifelong learning and that volunteering provides an opportunity to continue developing cultural awareness and intercultural skills.
• Provide activities that enable volunteers to effectively perform their tasks within AFS.
• Help volunteers feel comfortable while performing their tasks and make sure you provide them with support. For example:
  - Pair volunteers according to experience levels (a new one and an experienced one) when taking on support tasks or family interviews.

6 Interpersonal: Empathy
• To be able to manage disagreements with others effectively and respectfully.

ALUMNI ACTIVITIES
• Enable volunteers to participate in local official AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program opportunities and similar trainings (see the AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program section on afs.org.) This is a network-wide training and assessment program designed to help AFS volunteers and staff become better intercultural learning facilitators for AFS students.
and families, as well as schools and other audiences.

• Depending on the returnee’s maturity, offer opportunities to train to become a support volunteer.

• Provide training opportunities to improve communication, negotiation and mediation skills.

**Cultural: Knowledge and awareness**

• To understand the concepts of “culture” and intercultural adaptation.

**ALUMNI ACTIVITIES**

• Encourage potential volunteers to join the AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program to deepen their knowledge of intercultural concepts. Explain that this will also help them become successful AFS volunteers and a more aware member of the wider community.

• Provide activities and practical examples that make theoretical concepts come to life and show how these theories can be used in everyday life.

**Global: Commitment to contributing to the world community**

• To be willing and ready to work with others to help build peace, to improve world conditions and to commit to actions that will bring about a just and peaceful world.

• To engage in voluntary service toward the improvement of the local and global communities.

**ALUMNI ACTIVITIES**

• Provide an overview of the different possibilities for volunteering in AFS as a means for peace building.

• Create activities that will help potential volunteers realize the advantages of volunteering and the impact they could make in society. For example:
  - Engage returnees in supporting hosted students with their community projects related to becoming global citizens.

• Organize activities that emphasize both the mission and educational goals of AFS. Make sure volunteers know them and are able to relate to them. For example:
  - Organize training sessions during national volunteer meetings focusing on raising awareness on the AFS mission and educational goals.

• Create opportunities for volunteers to develop further skills such as facilitation skills. For example:
  - Organize induction sessions, short training sessions, trainings for trainers, live online meetings to discuss best practices, etc.
  - Provide opportunities for returnees to do presentations and workshops on AFS and/or intercultural learning for external audiences.
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