

AFS Educational Methodology Project:

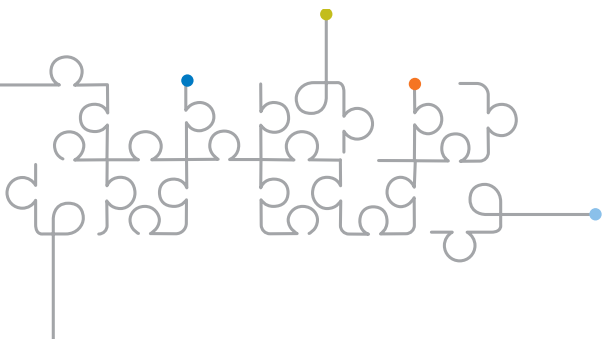
AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum

March 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

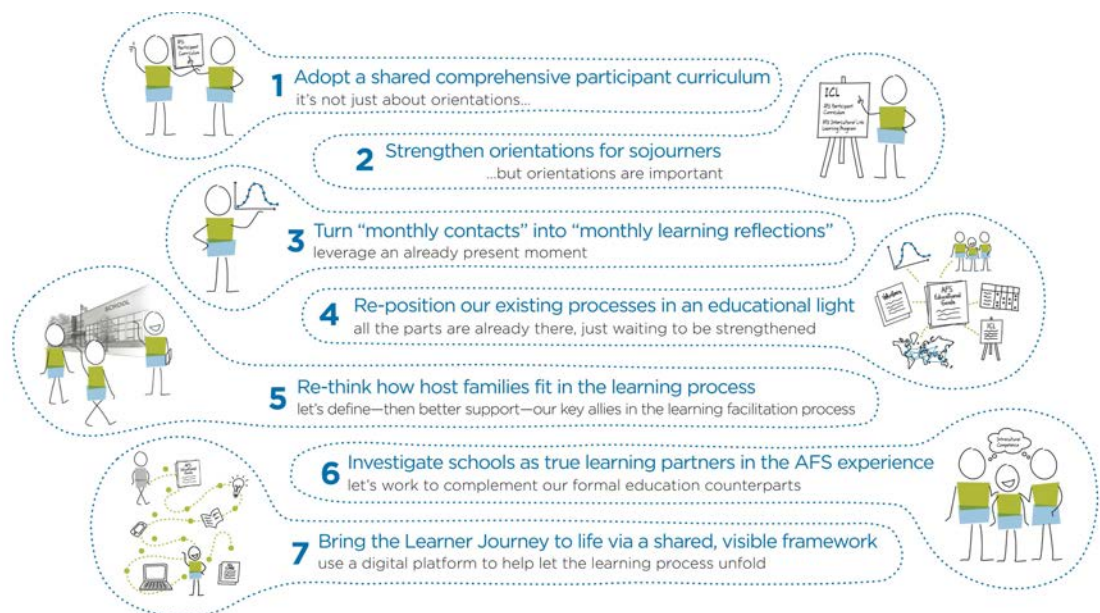
together a diverse set of resources from around the world to provide their perspectives on education, programs, support and organizational development to refine and clearly articulate how AFS helps our participants become interculturally competent. The result of their work clarified the purpose and expectations 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 (AFS 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

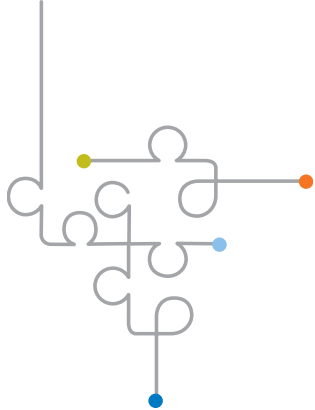
Our special thanks and acknowledgement for contributing to this Curriculum go to the following members of the Project Group for Recommendation #1: Adopt a shared comprehensive participant curriculum, Project Group for Recommendation #3: Turning Monthly Contacts into Monthly Learning Reflections and the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

Why does AFS need a shared comprehensive student curriculum?

During the 2013 AFS Educational Methodology Review Project¹, it became evident that the *AFS Orientation Framework*, which has been in place since 2007, is a good starting point for standardizing the delivery of educational content across the AFS Network. However, this framework is not being applied consistently and by itself, it is not enough. The full AFS learning experience is much more comprehensive than what is covered at orientation events. While AFS volunteers and staff are still expected to cover safety and logistical issues at orientations, a more inclusive outline of our methodology will help enhance the quality, and ultimately the impact, of the educational content we deliver.

As experiential learning providers, our approach needs to be holistic and incorporate learning moments in all of our existing touch points with students.

Every step of the student's AFS experience—from recruitment through the application, pre-departure process and post-return communications—is an opportunity for meaningful learning opportunities.

The lack of clear guidelines governing orientations and these other learning moments can cause both students and volunteers to disengage from the entire learning process. This can be especially problematic when the responsibilities of the AFS hosting and sending partners are not clearly defined, leading to unintentional duplication of information and/or activities in orientations. This can be remedied by spelling out not only which goals and related activities and methods can be the most effective for students at what times, but also which partner is accountable for specific steps in the process.

Also, we found that some of the *AFS Educational Goals*, in particular those in the Global Realm, are not being addressed in an intentional manner at any point in the AFS experience. The new *AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum* provides an intentional and stronger approach to help students become global citizens in an interconnected world.

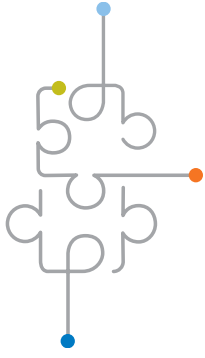
Altogether, these realizations prompted the Methodology Review Project group to recommend the development of a shared comprehensive curriculum for all AFS Partners that supports our educational methodology by providing clear guidelines for the AFS Network to use, while at the same time being flexible enough to allow for necessary local adaptations.

What is Global Citizenship?

Global Citizenship refers to a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity, promoting a “global gaze” that links the local to the global and the national to the international. It is also a way of understanding, acting and relating oneself to others and the environment in space and in time, based on universal values, through respect for diversity and pluralism.

In the European context, “active citizenship” stands for active participation of citizens in the economic, social, cultural and political fields of life. In the field of youth policy, much emphasis is placed on learning the necessary competences through voluntary activities. The aim is not only to improve the knowledge, but also the motivation, skills and practical experience to be an active citizen.

1 - The AFS Educational Methodology Review Project was led by AFS International with a task force and an advisory group made up of 13 representatives from across the AFS Network.



What is the new student curriculum based on?

The *AFS Educational Goals* and *AFS Student Learning Journey* serve as the backbone and have guided the design of this student curriculum. The project groups who have contributed to developing it believe that establishing a comprehensive curriculum with activities and methods mapped to explicit learning objectives will help students develop greater intercultural competence and achieve overall progress against all of the *AFS Educational Goals*. In addition, this curriculum:

- Outlines AFS hosting and sending partners' responsibilities
- Recommends activities and content for each learning touch point before, during and after the AFS experience, including a special focus on transforming the monthly contacts (that are a standard compliance component of AFS programs) into Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections.

Equally as important, the *AFS Student Learning Journey* presents all the steps a student who participates in a year or semester-long AFS intercultural exchange program goes through with our organization. The Journey should provide an interesting, inspiring, rewarding and enjoyable process for the student, as well as for all volunteers, staff and supporters who are also involved in the program.

With 16 *Educational Goals* and 40 learning objectives that we want AFS students to make progress in, it is important to understand that they are embarking on a lifelong learning experience and some of these goals will only start being developed during the AFS program.

This curriculum contains approaches and activities volunteers can use at orientations and the other touch points outlined in the Journey to help participants achieve the *AFS Educational Goals*. **While it is not mandatory that all of the activities suggested in the curriculum be used at each touch point, it is necessary to cover the specific goals and learning objectives indicated for each following the order presented.** The pace and the sequence of the content have been designed so that each touch point builds on the previous ones.

And, while partners are encouraged to adjust content to be locally appropriate at any given touch point, it is important to keep in mind that there are already a fairly large number of goals at each stage. Accordingly, AFS Partners should be very careful not to add too much more in terms of content or activities, which may overwhelm the student or the volunteers and staff who are facilitating the learning.

If you do decide to add any content, please make sure you are not advancing to an activity or approach that is already planned to be covered in later touch points.

Finally, we will develop orientation handbooks (including detailed Learning Session Outlines) later this year to support AFS Partners implementing this curriculum.

What AFS programs are supported by this new curriculum?

AFS considers both host families and exchange students as learners in our intercultural programs. This curriculum has been specifically designed to address students' learning needs before, during and after their AFS intercultural learning experience. Host families are not addressed as learners in this curriculum since another set of learning objectives and materials are being developed for that particular audience.

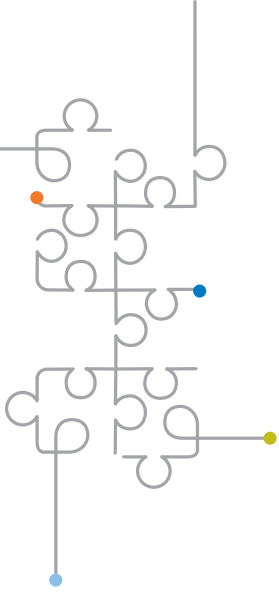
The student curriculum was developed to support the AFS core traditional school programs (year, semester and trimester), and until appropriate materials are developed for shorter programs, the curriculum can be adapted to be used with them as well. For year programs, the full version of the curriculum should be used. In the case of semester or trimester programs, the curriculum can be cut by taking out the mid-stay orientation. And in the case of shorter programs (4-6 weeks), the curriculum may only cover two orientations touch points: an extended or delayed arrival and an end-of-stay orientation, with an awareness of the different impact shorter programs may have on students. One of the most important adjustments of this curriculum for shorter programs will be in the times and number of Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections during the exchange.

AFS Host Family Learning Journey and Curriculum

In December 2014, a special working group published a report on **Recommendation #5: Rethink how host families fit in the learning process.** This document defined the educational goals and established a framework to improve the learning experience of host families. The *AFS Host Family Learning Journey and Curriculum* will be published in 2016.

What happens to the *AFS Orientation Framework* we have been using?

The *AFS Orientation Framework* was developed in 2007 as an effort to help students and host families achieve greater intercultural awareness, and to ensure the quality and consistency of orientations within the AFS Network before, during and after our exchange programs. However, rather than mapping content specifically to the *AFS Educational Goals* and learning objectives, the *AFS Orientation Framework* focuses more on practical programmatic information. It outlines the practical goals of all mandated orientations in the AFS orientation cycle in both the home and host countries, and it has been integrated into this curriculum.



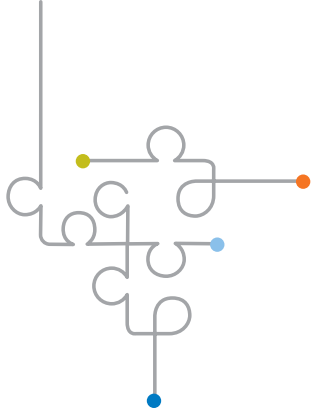
The educational value of AFS programs comes in large part from the direct experience of the students' encounters with previously unfamiliar places, concepts and cultures, and processing these in a structured way. This curriculum offers more educational support for students to get the most out of their experience with AFS. With a holistic approach, this curriculum goes beyond the Orientation Framework and transforms every major touch point with students into learning opportunities. Based on state-of-the-art research, we believe that using every step in the AFS experience and each type of interaction (such as personal contact and email communications) will increase the likelihood that students will make progress in attaining the *AFS Educational Goals* and becoming proactive global citizens. Going forward, **all orientations will continue providing the required logistics and personal safety information as previously stated in the *Orientation Framework* and use the *AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum* to guide the activities and discussions.**

One last note about orientations: Considering your own structure and budget, each AFS Partner should decide whether the orientations will take place at the local, regional or national level. A combination of these options is strongly recommended. We also recommend organizing the mid-stay orientation (evaluation) in particular at the local or chapter level. Combining local, regional and national orientations will strengthen your organization by empowering volunteers to take on an active role in the students' learning at all organizational levels.

Why are some of the learning objectives repeated at different touch points?

Some of the 16 *AFS Educational Goals* and 40 learning objectives are very ambitious and won't be fully achieved in only one—or even more—touch point(s) by every student. With this in mind, even though some learning objectives are repeated in different stages within the curriculum, this is done both deliberately and intentionally so that every “repeat” session builds on the previous one and adds a new element, idea or context to deepen the learning as students move along the *AFS Learning Journey*.

Similarly, when planning communications, discussions, exercises or activities for each touch point in the *AFS Student Learning Journey* using these guidelines, your volunteers and staff should make sure the activities are clearly indicated as a continuation of others in the previous stages. This allows students to develop cumulative learning, track their own progress and perceive the program as a holistic and comprehensive process.



What type of training and development do volunteers require to support the curriculum?

The success of this new, strengthened, learning-focused approach relies strongly on AFS volunteers and staff of both the sending and the hosting partners being trained to take on the roles needed to support different touch points identified throughout the program curriculum.

As a bare minimum starting point—to make intercultural learning for students more compelling—AFS local volunteers and staff members must be familiar with the 16 *AFS Educational Goals* and able to clearly explain the educational benefits of the AFS experience. For this reason, AFS Partner organizations should offer training opportunities for volunteers and staff to develop their skills in properly supporting the Learning Journey of AFS students.

The AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program content is structured in these 7 categories:

- 1 AFS Educational Approach**
- 2 Definitions & Concepts of Culture**
- 3 Cultural Values & Dimensions**
- 4 Communication Styles**
- 5 Cultural Adaptation**
- 6 Culture-Specific Insights**
- 7 Cognitive Styles & Learning Styles**

The AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program, with its different levels of content, is the official AFS Network training program on intercultural learning. It is intended for volunteers and staff to become more interculturally sensitive and to develop the abilities needed to facilitate learning in others. As something used around the AFS world, it also gives a shared vocabulary to volunteers and staff whether they are in China or Ghana, Canada or Germany. (For more information on the Link Learning Program, go to www.afs.org/afs-intercultural-link/learning-program.)

With this in mind, the *What Every AFSer Should Know about Intercultural Learning™ 2.0* essentials training from the Link Learning Program is mandatory for all volunteers and staff around the AFS Network. “Level W” (as it is known) is to be completed by all new AFS volunteers and staff within six months of their registration as a volunteer or employment as staff. It is also offered retroactively to volunteers and staff members who became involved with AFS before the training was created. The number of volunteers and staff members who take this training is shared annually with the AFS Network leadership.

In addition to Level W, AFS also provides a variety of trainings at the local, national, regional and international level to help volunteers develop the skills and competencies required to effectively support this curriculum.

Appropriate training for support volunteers is mandatory for anyone taking on this role and should take place at least once a year (or twice if Partners host long programs in both cycles). This training should be done using a combination of in-person and online methods.

Additional basic training for support volunteers taking on the task of facilitating Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections must include (with some of this content delivered through online tools):

- AFS rules, procedures and quality standards
- AFS educational approach including goals, methodology and assessment
- Training expectations for the role, and core advice on how to perform the task

More advanced training including topics like conflict resolution, intercultural learning concepts and theories, communication skills, etc. are also ideally delivered in an in-person event. All these topics are included in Levels 1-3 of the AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program.

Partners may also offer online or in-person coaching sessions for support volunteers either to discuss specific cases or to provide them with topics such as questioning and listening, conversation starters, writing reflection tools, etc.

We recommended that your organization provides recognition for participating trainings that are useful not only for volunteers and staff personal growth and AFS work, but also for their professional development.

Finally, all AFS volunteers and staff are encouraged to register for and use the AFS Digital Intercultural Learning Library on AFS Global, a depository for educational and quality standards materials, projects and ideas from across the AFS Network. Materials such as the *ICL for AFS & Friends*—a series of short, insightful articles on important intercultural topics featuring AFS's point of view—are housed in the library in multiple languages to help volunteers improve their knowledge and competences. (For the series, you can also go to www.afs.org/afs-intercultural-link/educational-publications.)

How do we currently train volunteers conducting monthly contacts?

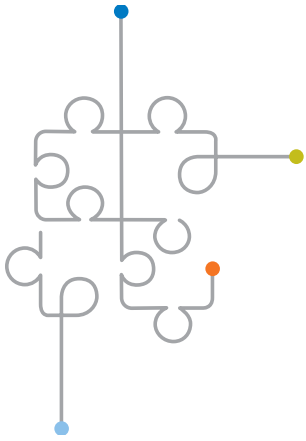
Training for support volunteers varies around the AFS Network. Many Partners provide these volunteers with handbooks and resources to help them perform the support volunteer role.

Regarding more in-depth training, some partners have a mandatory online training module as a starting point for volunteers who will be doing the monthly contacts. This may then be followed by other in-person training opportunities.

In some AFS organizations, in-person support volunteer training is held parallel to the student *Arrival Orientation* or the AFS annual national meeting, while others run local trainings through their pool of trainers or support staff. Although the expectation is for all support volunteers to attend the specific training events, this is not always achieved.

Tips on Coaching

Coaching sessions offer an opportunity for a more experienced volunteer or staff member to provide positive support, feedback and advice, on an individual or group basis, to improve effectiveness in dealing with support cases.



Why are we turning Monthly Contacts into Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections?

Our current reality

As a first step to implement **Recommendation #3: Turn Monthly Contacts into Monthly Learning Reflections**, members of that Methodology Project subgroup provided insights into their own current practices to better understand the AFS Network reality regarding monthly contacts. Having a clear picture of where we are at the moment made clear that we have an opportunity to significantly enhance the monthly contacts by turning them into meaningful learning encounters.

Monthly contacts are a key part of assuring the well-being and safety of AFS students. These are also required by *AFS Standards, Policies and Procedures* (found in the Library on AFS Global). While this continues to be the case, we are taking these moments as an opportunity to enhance students' learning. The new name to reflect this will be Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections.

The following is a summary of the conversations and discussions the project group had around different aspects of the monthly contacts in AFS at the time of this writing.

Who performs the monthly contacts?

In most AFS organizations, grassroots volunteers who are supported by local support coordinators and the program staff carry out monthly contacts. When local structures are not available or are not strong enough, the AFS partner program support staff takes on the task to make sure the monthly contacts happen. Sometimes volunteers focusing other tasks, such as school coordinators, take on the role of monthly support as well and thus have multiple roles in the organization. In some cases, teachers are assigned to provide this monthly support to the participants.

When does the first monthly contact with students currently happen?

There are different scenarios to explain when the first contact takes place. If a student has been placed in a host family at least three weeks prior to arrival, some partners encourage support volunteers to introduce themselves to students via email or Facebook messages. Separate from virtual introductions, a personal visit to the host family (if it was not the same volunteer who did the interview) should take place before arrival. In most cases though, the first personal contact with the student happens either at the arrival orientation or within the first seven days after arrival. However, the first monthly contact report is usually issued one month after the arrival.

What is the role of the volunteer conducting the monthly contacts?

As a prerequisite for successful monthly contacts and support in general, it is essential that the volunteer who has this task build rapport and develop a trusting relationship with student and host family as a solid base for future interventions. Then, the main roles of a volunteer doing monthly contacts include:

- **Contacting and reporting:** Volunteers are responsible for keeping contact with and following up on the student, host family and host school progress. These contacts should be reported to the local support coordinator and staff.
- **Problem solving/conflict resolution:** Volunteers intervene to help students and host families solve problems and even mediate between parties.
- **Facilitating intercultural learning:** Support volunteers act as a “cultural informant.” They facilitate the intercultural and other learning that takes place.

What is a cultural informant?

A cultural informant is someone who has access to the most internal information related to a culture and is willing to share this information in an unbiased way. (For more information see ICL for AFS & Friends “Basic Intercultural Terminology”.)

What do we call the volunteers doing the monthly contacts?

The volunteers doing and reporting monthly contacts receive a wide variety of names depending on the AFS Partner. The most common ones are “support volunteers,” “liaisons” and “contact persons.” In some cases, they are also called counselors. We do not recommend using the title “counselors,” as this term can be perceived by students, host families and host schools as someone who has formal qualifications in psychology and can deal with all sorts of psychological issues and problems. The word “counselor” also implies someone who gives advice and not a facilitator. In Belgium Flanders, for example, the name was recently changed to “begeleiders” (facilitators) to move away from the concept of counselors.

We recommend using the term “support volunteers.”

What are the most common problems support volunteers face?

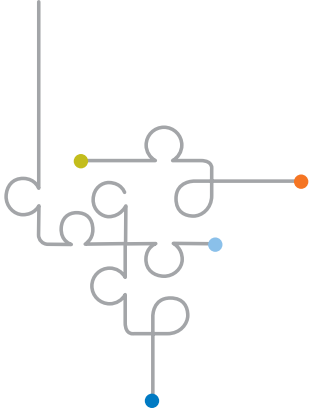
There are two main areas of common problems related to monthly contacts: Issues concerning the role of volunteers and problems that volunteers face with students and host families.

Issues with the support volunteer role as it is currently set up:

- **Finding enough people to serve as support volunteers who have the right skills set (see page 20) or who stay in the organization long enough to become well-trained and qualified for providing support.** Volunteers' busy schedules and sometimes long distances between where the volunteer and student are based can also make it hard to maintain monthly contacts.
- **Reporting monthly contacts:** It is usually challenging to keep up support volunteers' motivation to be in regular contact with the student and record these encounters on AFS Global. They feel there is no need for monthly contact if the experience is going well. The new approach aims at improving volunteers' motivation to do these monthly encounters while facilitating a more meaningful learning experience for the student.
- **Dealing with confidential information:** A previous relationship with the host family or the development of a close relationship with the student can interfere with the ability of support volunteers to remain neutral and manage conflicts or confidential information.
- **Lack of a structured process or space for support volunteers to reflect on their role and own learning process.** This issue can be tackled by AFS Partners by engaging in the AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program opportunities through all its levels (W-3) and offering an official national version of this program locally. (Contact the Intercultural Link Learning Program Team at AFS International about how to do this.)

Issues commonly faced by volunteers when supporting students:

- **AFS expectations versus cultural norms:** In some cultures, reporting anything negative can be difficult, so volunteers report only the positives as a way of saving face or not making any of the parties "look bad." Expectations about the initiation and nature of the contact varies across cultures, too.
- **Establishing rapport:** The age of the support volunteer (especially if he or she is very young or much older than the student) can make establishing a good relationship challenging for both parties. Language barriers with students at the beginning of the experience can also interfere in building a positive rapport.
- **Conflict management:** Having to mediate between students and host families, and possibly intervening when AFS goals and rules are not being followed.
- **Expectations management:** Both students and host families may hold expectations that do not match those of the organization.



Vision for the future: Recommendations for the new Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections

These recommendations will help volunteers adjust how they implement monthly contacts so that these sessions evolve into Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections. The new format is designed to make a bigger educational impact on the AFS student.

Who should do the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections?

Local volunteers who are trained on the core concepts of support and intercultural learning (as outlined in *What Every AFSer Should Know About Intercultural Learning™ 2.0* or “Level W” of the AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program) should conduct these Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections with students. These local volunteers should meet regularly (at least once a month) with the students for about 60-90 minutes each time. The first few contacts should always be in person to help develop a relationship and establish rapport. As the relationship develops, some contacts may be made over phone, on Skype or other long-distance communications platforms. In-person meetings are always the preferred way of conducting Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections.

What should the updated role of these volunteers be?

Being responsible for facilitating the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections and reporting them is a role that can co-exist with other roles or tasks within the local AFS structure. Depending on human resources and skills available, facilitation of Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections can be one of multiple tasks or the only task a volunteer performs. To avoid misunderstandings and manage expectations properly, local volunteers should work in a coordinated manner with the national staff.

These volunteers are the first point of contact in AFS for students and host families. They need to be knowledgeable about AFS standards, rules and procedures.

Support volunteers should 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. These volunteers are expected to provide practical support as well as to facilitate students’ self-reflection to improve their intercultural competence and progress toward this and other *AFS Educational Goals*.

Support volunteers should also record the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections held with the students in the required AFS Global Link form.

Keeping in compliance with *AFS Standards, Policies and Procedures* concerning regular checks on well-being, this will also provide both the sending and the hosting Partner the ability to track the student's progress in cultural adaptation, and to provide timely and appropriate support.

Performing all of these tasks may be time consuming for some volunteers. This is one of the reasons why (together with generational differences, cultural values etc.), some partners may decide to have the same volunteer doing the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections with both the student and the host family, while others may choose to split this role among two people—one volunteer supporting the family, another supporting the student. There are pros and cons for both approaches, so each Partner should choose the one that best fits their culture and organizational structure.

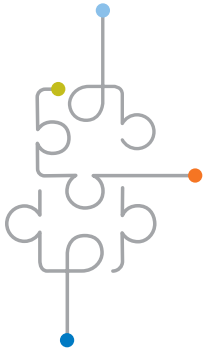
Finally, in addition to facilitating learning and monitoring well-being, support volunteers have a conflict management role: They are expected to identify and deal with arising conflicts between students and host families, with a main focus on preventing these from getting to a point of crisis.

What should we call those volunteers?

As we mentioned earlier in this report, there are several names that partners could consider using: coach, facilitator of intercultural learning, mentor, support contact, student/family liaison. Taking into account local language and cultural considerations, it is important that the name for the role reflects the “support” offered *and* the “learning reflection” that happens during those monthly meetings. As noted above, our recommendation is the term “support volunteers,” which we use throughout this document.

What are the required competences for the support volunteer?

- Knowledge of AFS mission, standards, policies, procedures and *AFS Educational Goals*
- Knowledge of relevant laws and regulations regarding exchange programs
- Communication skills, including being able to listen actively without judgment
- Ability to build relationships and trust
- Ability to be proactive
- Conflict management skills: remaining neutral while hearing and recognizing everyone's perspective in a conflict
- Conflict resolution skills: identifying assistance needed in difficult situations and being able to mediate between the parties



- Intercultural sensitivity and competencies to bring more learning into the process and to guide participants towards reflection (We encourage support volunteers to complete *What Every AFSer Should Know About Intercultural Learning™ 2.0.*)
- Empathy with students and families
- Some knowledge about and sensitivity for adolescents.

When should the first contact with the student take place?

The support contact person should meet the host family before the arrival of the student in the host community. If this contact is established via email, Facebook or other social networks instead of in-person, volunteers should make sure they are aware of and follow the existing local AFS guidelines for the use of such networks.

Students should have information about their contact person immediately after arrival, or ideally before departing from their home country.

Importantly, the first in-person contact between the support volunteer and the student must be within the first week after arriving in the local community. This first contact should be focused on introductions, establishing rapport and making sure everything is running smoothly and that the student and family clearly understand how contact can be made with the volunteer and what his or her role will be throughout the program.

A more thorough Monthly Contact & Learning Reflection meeting should be held and reported ideally by two weeks, but no later than a month after arrival.

How are the *AFS Educational Goals* achieved with the support of Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections?

As a standard AFS practice, the full set of *AFS Educational Goals* is shared by the sending partners with students, and by the hosting partners with host families right after the selection process in order to align expectations for the experience. The importance and relevance of such goals are reinforced during the acceptance messaging and other touch points with participants.

Whether the *AFS Educational Goals* are achieved during the AFS experiences and to what extent is a very personal and individual process. AFS students start their intercultural exchange journeys at different points and will progress at different paces. However, the role of AFS support volunteers in this process is to help students reach their potential by establishing a strong learning partnership and fostering structured reflection in each meeting.

There is a great deal of room to work towards achieving any of the learning objectives within the *AFS Educational Goals* during the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections. Depending on the student and the situation, the focus of the Monthly Contact & Learning Reflection will vary in each case.

What is structured reflection?

Structured reflection is a key part of the Experiential Learning Cycle. It allows students to reflect about the concrete experiences they are facing, identify key issues and what they learned from them and finally be able to apply what they learn in future experiences.

For more information on Experiential Learning please refer to *Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle for AFS & Friends*.

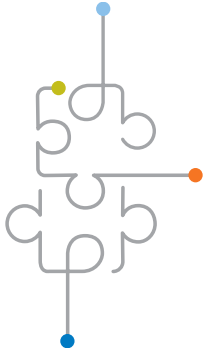
The AFS Educational Approach



The AFS Educational Approach has four key components:

1. Goals: what we want students to learn.
2. Methodology: how we help students reach those goals.
3. Results: how do we know if students are learning what we want them to learn?
4. Volunteer training: as a volunteer based organization, training and development is key so we can properly help AFS students develop the skills and knowledge described in the AFS Educational Goals.

The AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum is part of the efforts in improving the methodology part of the AFS Educational Approach



“Real-life experiential learning, supported by structured reflection, is the core of our programs.”

—AFS Vision 2020

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.**

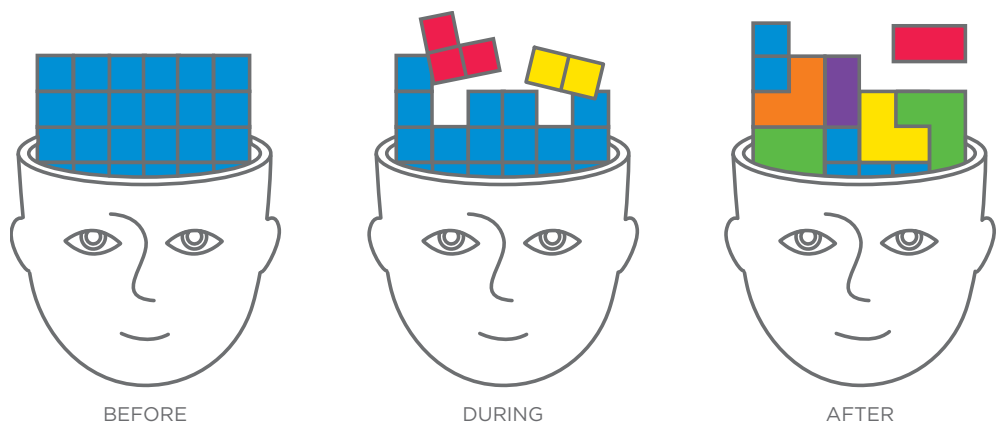
These lessons, discussions and activities take place outside of a classroom or traditional academic setting. Instead, trained AFS volunteers and staff work in partnership with host families, schools and the students to support progressive learning activities and discussions that encourage students to 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.

OUR APPROACH IS THEN:

- 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.

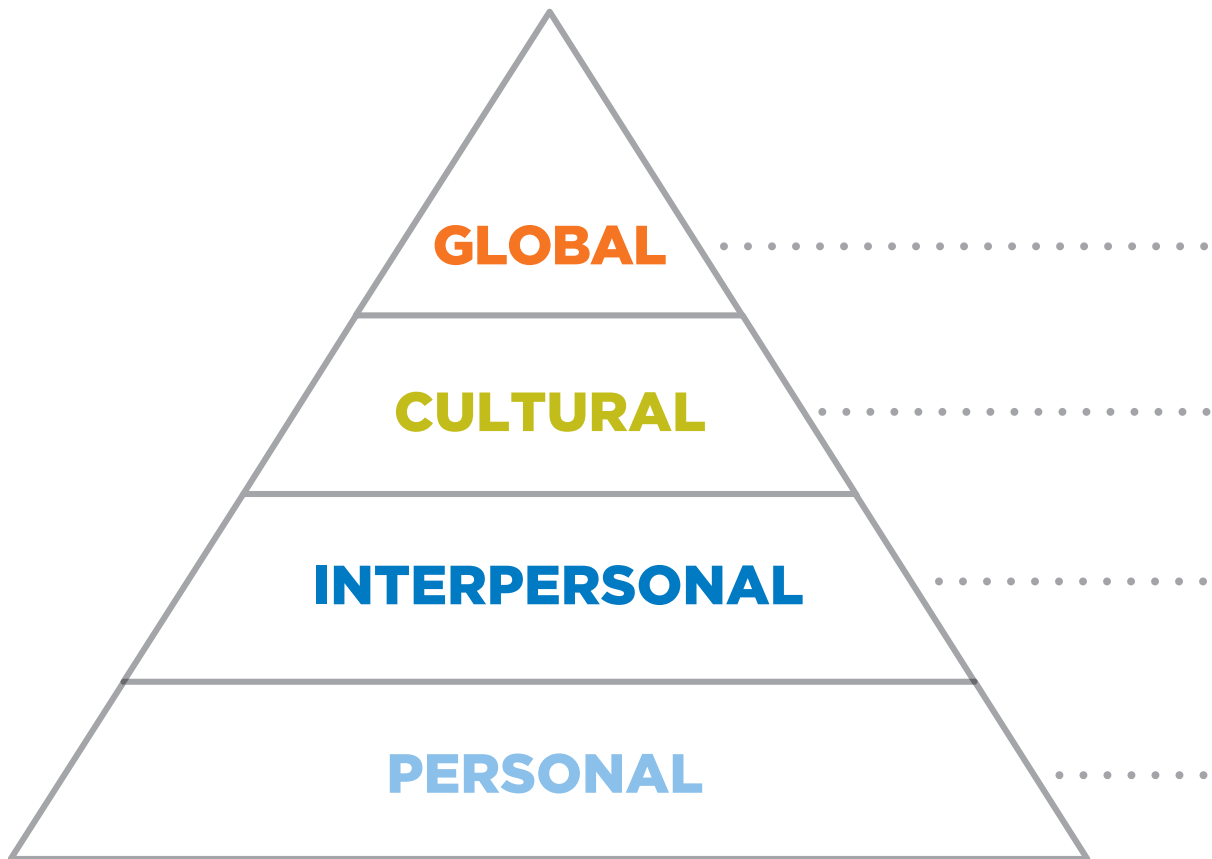
The AFS intercultural learning experience is not confined to the time spent abroad. As mentioned earlier, the *AFS Student Learning Journey* starts before students leave their home country. From the moment they apply to an AFS program, students are asked to reflect on who they are, what strengths they 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.

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.

(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.

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.

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.



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.

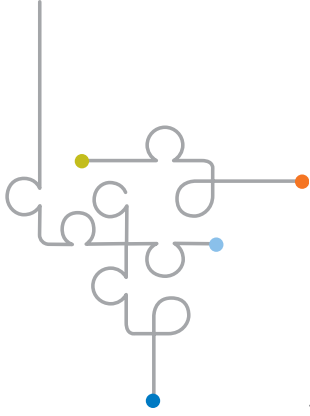
13 Intercultural effectiveness

- 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.

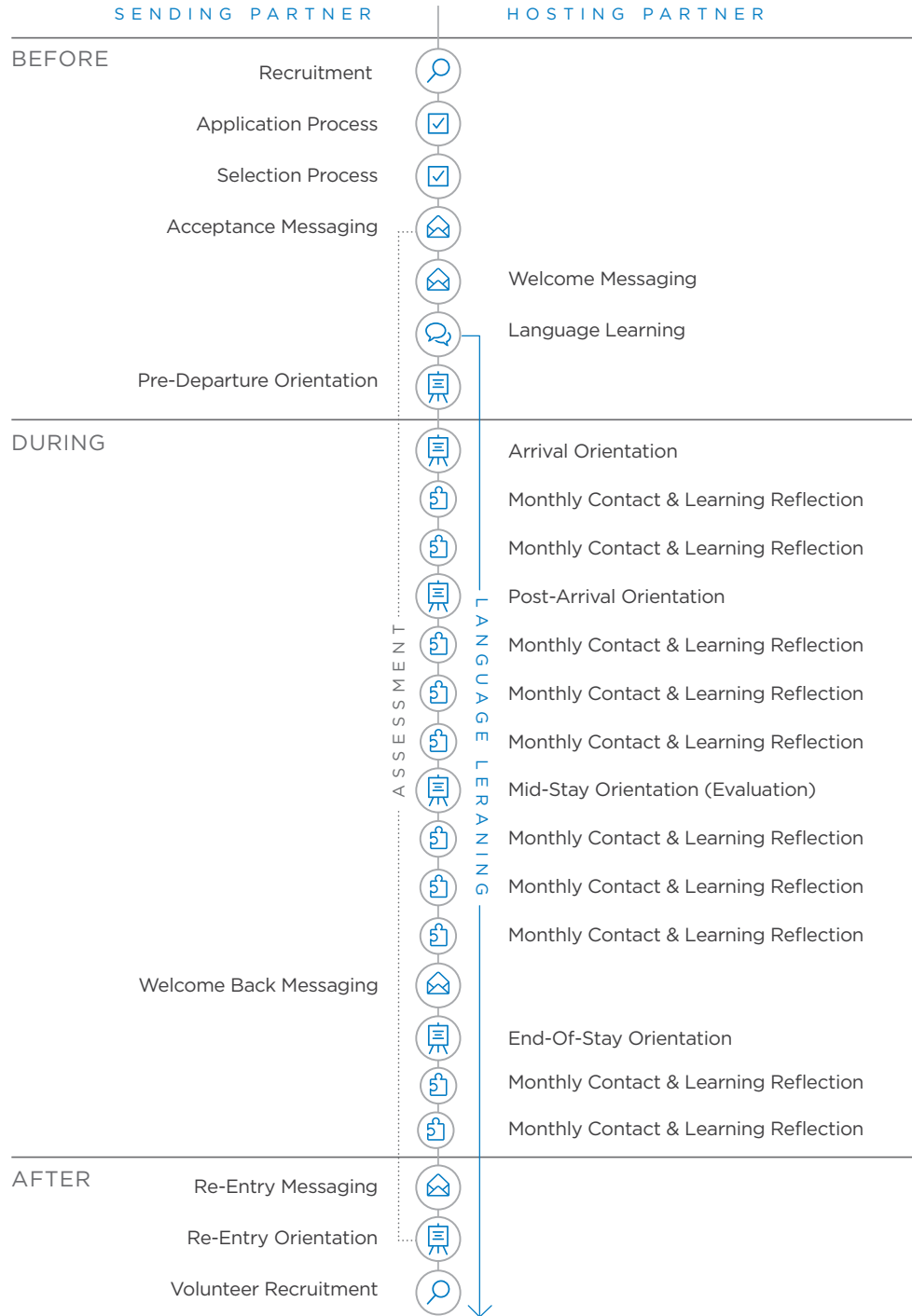


GLOBAL REALM

- 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



The AFS Student Learning Journey shows the exact moments (touch points) before, during and after the students exchange experience when we intervene through messages, activities, projects and reflection opportunities to help them reach the AFS Educational Goals. It also states Partners' responsibilities for each one of those learning touch points.



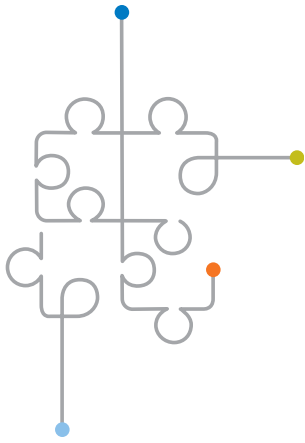
Distribution of 16 AFS Educational Goals Among the AFS Student Learning Journey Touch Points

	BEFORE						DURING						AFTER		
	Recruitment	Application Process	Selection Process	Acceptance Messaging	Welcome Messaging	Pre-Departure Orientation	Monthly Learning Reflections	Arrival Orientation	Post-Arrival Orientation	Mid-Stay Orientation	End-Of-Stay Orientation	Welcome Back Messaging	Re-Entry Messaging	Re-Entry Orientation	Volunteer Recruitment
PERSONAL															
1 Self-awareness	●	●	●	●		●	●		●	●	●		●	●	
2 Creative thinking						●	●		●						
3 Critical thinking						●	●		●		●			●	
4 Motivation and self-confidence	●		●			●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●
5 Defining self in terms of ideals and values			●			●	●	●	●					●	
INTERPERSONAL															
6 Empathy			●			●	●		●						●
7 Flexibility and Social skills			●				●			●					
8 Communication skills		●				●	●		●	●					
9 Commitment to others and contributing to the group							●		●	●					
CULTURAL															
10 Building intercultural friendships						●	●	●							
11 Cultural knowledge and awareness					●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		●
12 Foreign language skills and non-verbal communication				●	●		●								
13 Intercultural effectiveness							●		●	●	●			●	
GLOBAL															
14 Global concern						●	●							●	
15 Global understanding							●			●				●	
16 Commitment to contributing to the world community							●		●	●				●	●
LANGUAGE LEARNING*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

*Language learning is encouraged throughout the AFS experience.

The table shows the distribution of the 16 AFS Educational Goals among the 16 touch points of the AFS Student Learning Journey making it easier to understand what the focus for each one of those moments is. The combination of the AFS Educational Goals and the AFS Student Learning Journey constitutes the backbone of this curriculum.












BEFORE

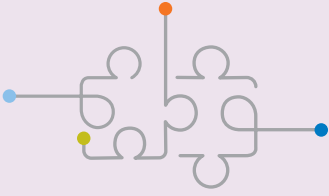
the AFS Intercultural Experience

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)

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Sending Partner in local language(s).

WHEN

All year round with special emphasis before the selection process begins.

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

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Sending Partner in local language(s).

WHEN

The application process starts when students show interest in the AFS program and begin completing the application form. The completed form will be shared with the local volunteer, as well as the future hosting partner and family.

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.

8 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

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Sending Partner in local language(s).

WHEN

The selection process takes place after the applications are submitted for each cycle. (Partners choose whether they have one or multiple selection periods per year.)

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?*

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.

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.

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.

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?*

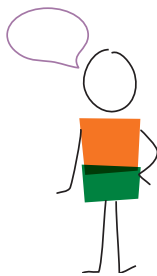
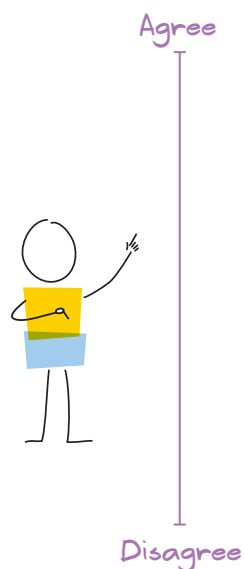


6 Interpersonal: Empathy

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

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.



“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?*

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.



7 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?*



“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:

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

- ▶ 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.

12 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:

11 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.

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

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:

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

- ▶ 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

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Sending Partner in local language(s).

WHEN

All activities should be covered four to six weeks before departure.

DURATION

The pre-departure orientation prepares students for their travel abroad, their intercultural experience and seeing the world as a young global citizen. It could be held over a weekend, several days or several meetings before departure.

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 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 icllibrary.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 icllibrary.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.

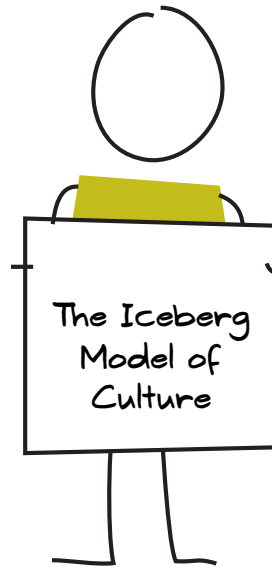


SWOT Analysis



SWOT stands for *strengths*, *weaknesses*, *opportunities*, and *threats* and is a structured way of evaluating internal (strength and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) factors that can help or prevent someone from achieving her/his objectives.

- **Strengths:** characteristics, skills, knowledge, personality traits, etc. of a person that gives an advantage over others
- **Weaknesses:** characteristics, skills, knowledge, personality traits, etc. that place the a person at a disadvantage relative to others
- **Opportunities:** elements from the environment/situation that could play to person's advantage
- **Threats:** elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the person



The image of an iceberg is often used within AFS as a metaphor for culture. There are some visible aspects above the water, but there is a larger portion hidden beneath the surface. The external part of a culture is what we can see and is the tip of the iceberg. It includes artifacts and behaviors. The internal part of culture is below the surface and includes values, beliefs and thought patterns that underlie behavior. When seen above the water, only approximately 10% of the iceberg is observable - most of it is hidden in the water.





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.)

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.

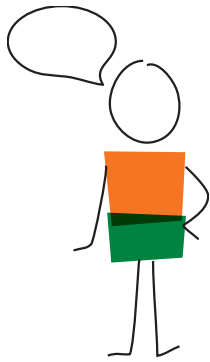
STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- 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.



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



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.

8 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.

11 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.

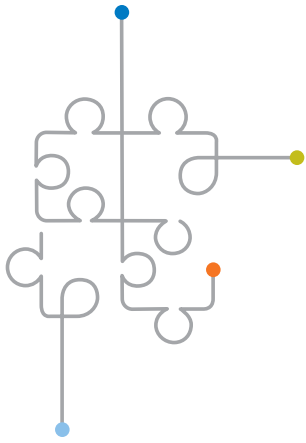
14 Global: Global concern—interest in and concern about world affairs and awareness of one’s choices on others

- 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)



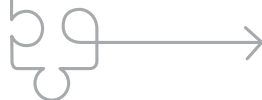
Welcome Back Messaging

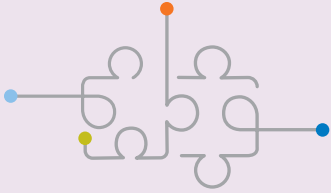


End-Of-Stay Orientation



Monthly Contact & Learning Reflections





DURING the AFS Intercultural Experience

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

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.

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.



Language Learning

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.

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.



Arrival Orientation

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Hosting partner in English.

WHEN

Within the first week of arrival in the country.

DURATION

Minimum of one day.

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

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Hosting Partner in local language(s).

WHEN

Four to six weeks after arrival.

DURATION

Minimum of two days.

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:

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

- ▶ 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 icllibrary.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.

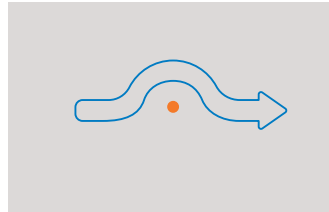
STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- ▶ 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 for *Concepts and Theories of Culture for AFS & Friends*.)
- ▶ Introduce different communication styles (high/low context, direct/indirect)

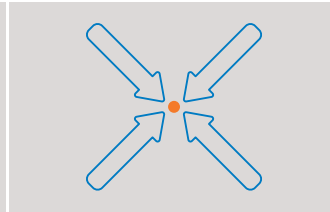


and value dimensions (individualism/collectivism, power distance) by examining critical incidents (ask students to share or have pre-defined examples) and/or role-play. (See examples of Communication Styles below. Review *What Every AFSer Should Know About Intercultural Learning 2.0* in the ICL Library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

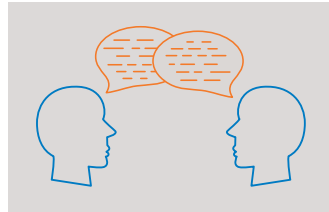
INDIRECT



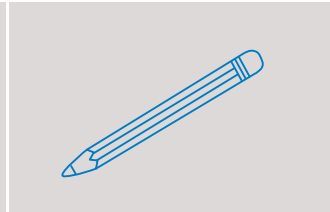
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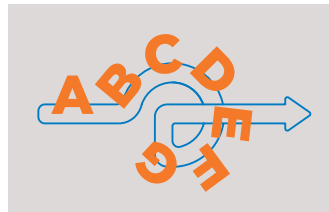
RELATIONSHIP



TASK



CIRCULAR



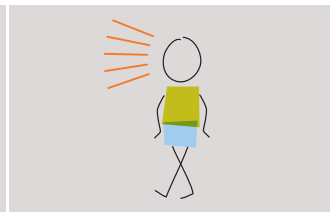
LINEAR



HIGH CONTEXT



LOW CONTEXT



Communication Styles



13 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.

16 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.



Mid-Stay Orientation

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Hosting Partner in local language(s).

WHEN

Approximately mid-point in the experience.

DURATION

Minimum of two days.

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:

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

- ▶ 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?*

7 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

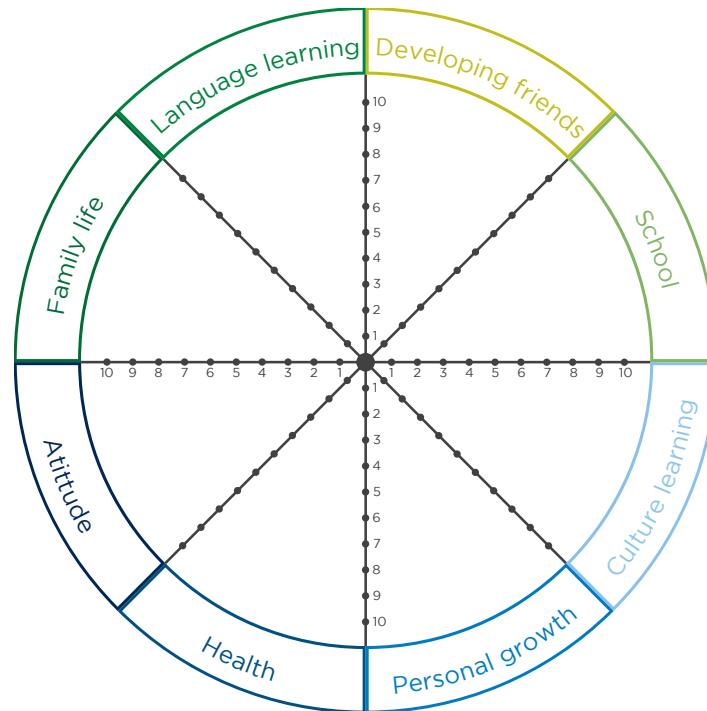
- To engage with others in a spirit of cooperation, with respect and appreciation for their goals and decisions.
- To contribute actively and positively in school, community and family life.
- To be worthy of and to inspire trust.

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?*

11 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 “Barnga” when most of the participants have already done this simulation because they would already know “the trick.”

15 **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.

16 **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

Volunteering is explored further in the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections section.

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.



Welcome Back Messaging

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Sending Partner in local language(s).

WHEN

Four to six weeks before returning home.

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:

4 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.

11 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.



End-of-Stay Orientation

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Hosting partner in local language(s).

WHEN

Two to six weeks before departure.

DURATION

Minimum of two days.

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:

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.

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.



2 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.

11 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

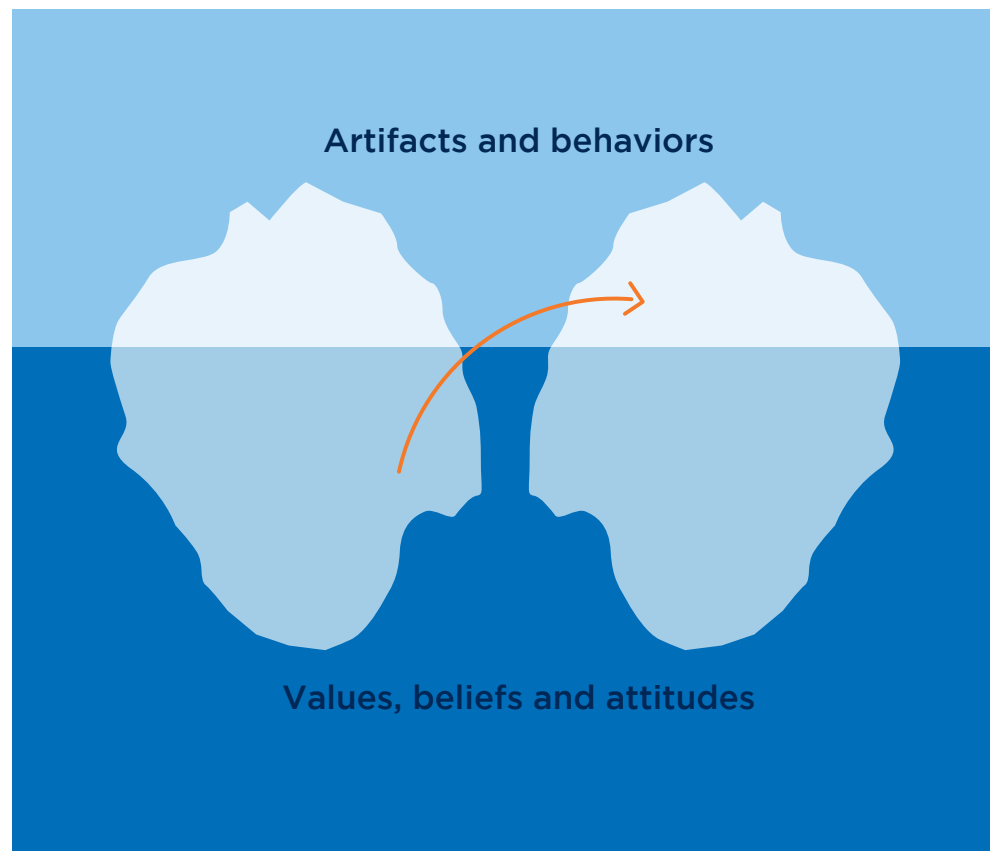
- ▶ Allow students to realize the scope of their knowledge of the host culture on two levels:
 1. Observable practices and artifacts,
 2. Values and attitudes that they have experienced here.
- ▶ To do this, have students draw two icebergs (one for the host culture and



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?*

Artifacts and behaviors are the things that we see on the visual part of the cultural iceberg, but we see them from a perspective made up of our own values, beliefs and attitudes.





- ▶ 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.

13 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)

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Hosting partner in
local language(s).

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.



Volunteers and staff should view participants as unfinished products; the image should be of a “product” (the AFSer) passing through cumulative phases of development that begin at selection and continue even after he or she leaves the program (Report on the Workshop on Intercultural Learning, 1984).

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:

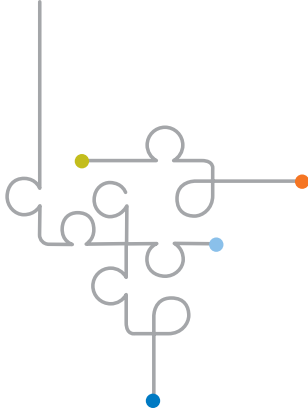
- Try to identify common or similar interests, anecdotes and life experiences. Remember that your goal is to build a sense of camaraderie and trust. And keep in mind that being friendly does not mean becoming friends with the student.

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:

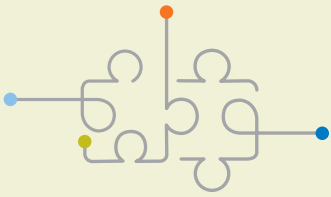
- Being able to remember details of the student’s life that are significant for them, shows them you care and you are genuinely interested in helping them.
- Don’t forget that **rapport isn’t something you can force**. Implementing some of these tips may help, but it is essential to genuinely care about 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

	Learning Focus Area #1 Discovering and developing awareness of cultural differences	Learning Focus Area #2 Deepening skills and understanding	Learning Focus Area #3 The intercultural self in the world	Learning Focus Area #4 Preparing for the return to the home culture
PERSONAL				
1 Self-awareness	●	●	●	●
2 Creative thinking	●	●		
3 Critical thinking	●			
4 Motivation and self-confidence		●		
5 Defining self in terms of ideals and values				●
INTERPERSONAL				
6 Empathy		●		
7 Flexibility and Social skills				●
8 Communication skills	●	●		●
9 Commitment to others and contributing to the group			●	
CULTURAL				
10 Building intercultural friendships		●		
11 Cultural knowledge and awareness	●	●	●	●
12 Foreign language skills and non-verbal communication		●	●	●
13 Intercultural effectiveness		●	●	
GLOBAL				
14 Global concern			●	
15 Global understanding			●	
16 Commitment to contributing to the world community			●	
LANGUAGE LEARNING	●	●	●	●

*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. 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.

What is a cultural informant?

A cultural informant is someone who has access to the most internal information related to a culture and is willing to share this information in an unbiased way. (For more information see Basic Intercultural Terminology for AFS & Friends in the ICL Library at iclibrary.afs.org.)



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:

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?*

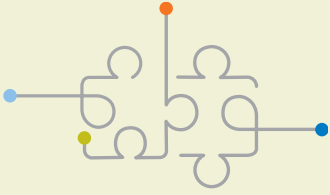
Discuss the school experience with the student especially if they talk about challenges at school. Ask questions such as:

- *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

WHEN

This time period may begin as early as the second month, but will usually start around the third month and may last to the mid-point of the student's experience.

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:

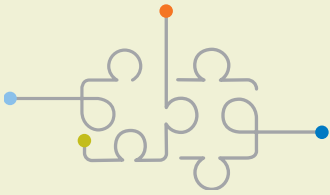
- *What does the word “yes” mean in your home culture? What does the word “yes” mean in your host culture? How is this different?*
- *What are common topics of conversation back home? What are common topics of conversation in the host community? Do you notice a difference in what topics are “safe” in 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. (**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?*

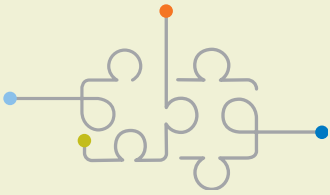


HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY ACTIVITY

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?*



**WHEN**

This may begin in the last four to six weeks of the student's experience.

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?*

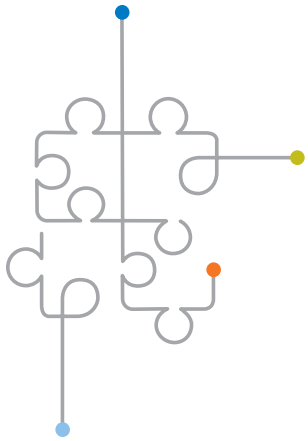


HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY ACTIVITY

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.)*





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

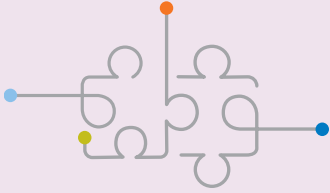


Re-Entry Orientation



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

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Hosting Partner in local language(s).

WHEN

Immediately or up to one week after arrival back home.

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.

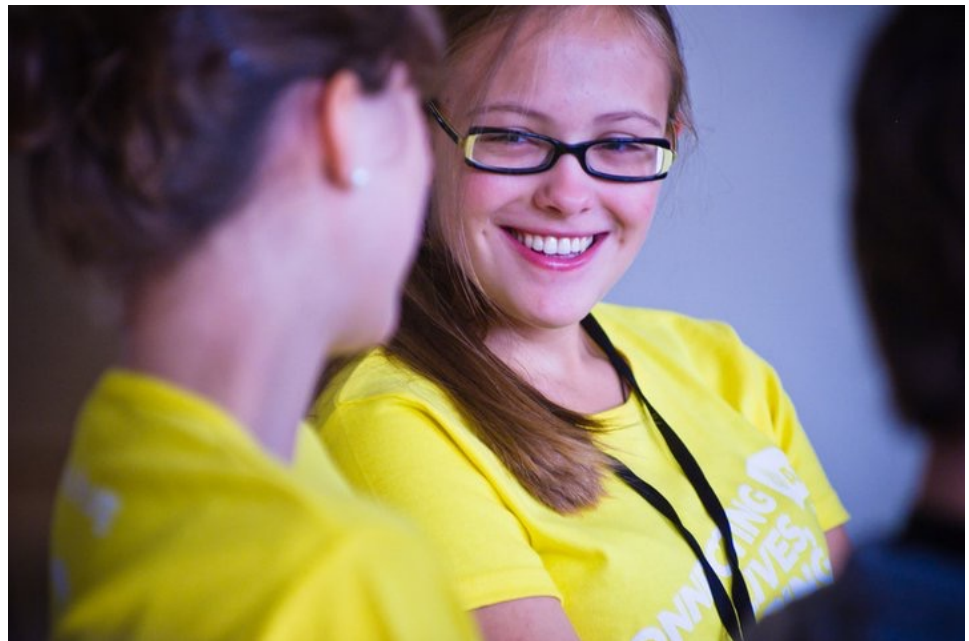


11 Cultural: Knowledge and awareness

- 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

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Sending Partner in local language(s).

WHEN

Two to six weeks after arrival back to the home country.

DURATION

Minimum of one day.

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:

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.

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.

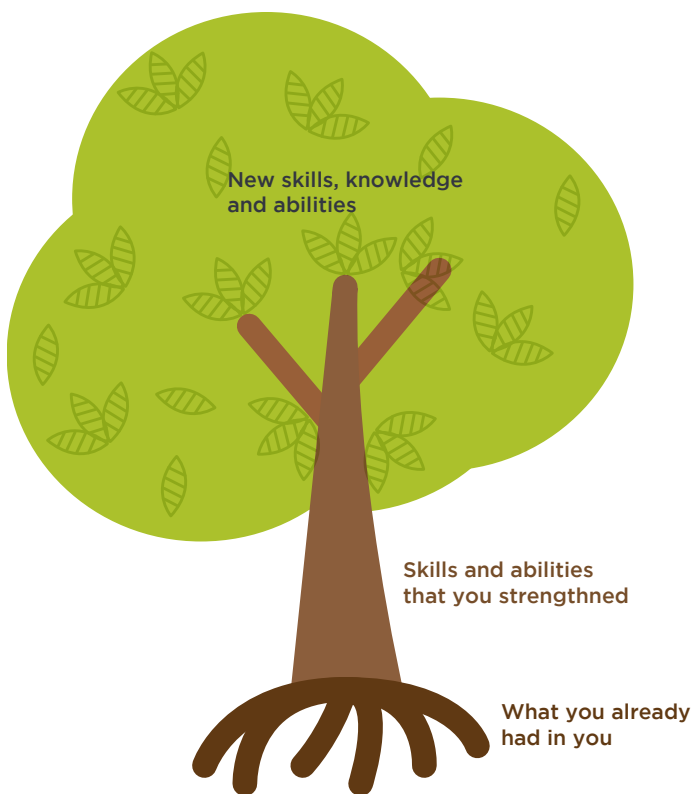
ALUMNI ACTIVITIES

- ▶ 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.

15 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.

16 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

RESPONSIBILITY AND LANGUAGE

Sending Partner in local language(s).

WHEN

All year round.

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.

11 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.

16 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.

AFS Educational Methodology Project:

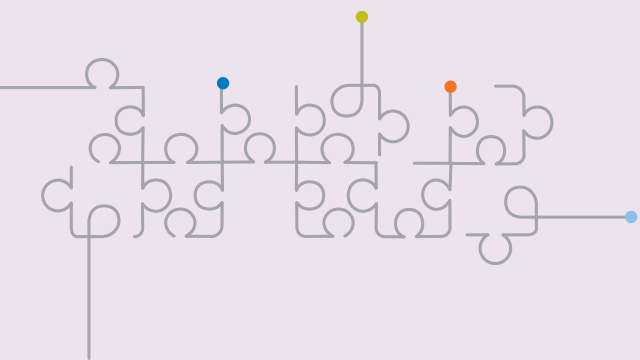
Resources for AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum

March 2016

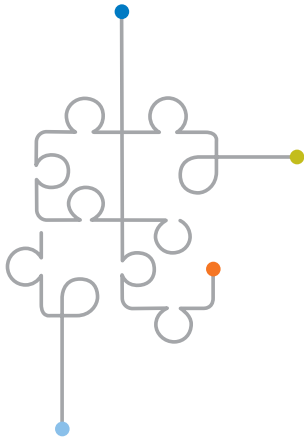


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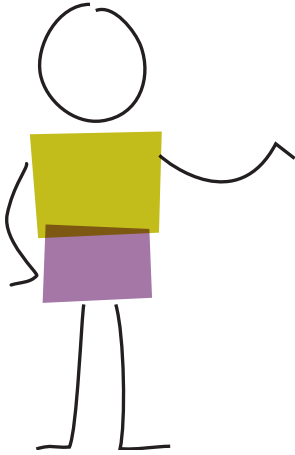


Intercultural Learning Tools and Guidelines

- A. Assessing the Candidate
- B. Being part of my local community
- C. The D.I.V.E. Model: Describe, Interpret, Verify, Evaluate
- D. Sample Orientation Learning Session Outline

A. Assessing the Candidate

INTRODUCTION



The following criteria for the selection of AFS students are based on the findings of numerous studies conducted over the past 25 years related to the assessment of candidates for international experiences. Some of these studies were carried out by the AFS Center for the Study of Intercultural Learning; these examined factors related to the assessment of AFS students. Other studies conducted outside of AFS focused on the assessment of Peace Corps volunteers, technical assistance experts, and business managers on assignment abroad. The results of these studies, which show widespread agreement, are reflected in the following guidelines for assessing the suitability of candidates for participation in AFS programs.

THE GOAL OF SCREENING CANDIDATES

The goal of the screening process is to verify that the candidates show promise of being able to live and learn effectively in the host country. In practice, a screening committee works toward this goal by identifying any candidates who, for one reason or another, appear to be at risk of causing great difficulties for themselves and others during the course of their AFS experience. These candidates must then be dropped from the candidate pool. This is a demanding task that requires a screening committee well prepared to collect and review several types of information about each candidate.

PERSONAL QUALITIES TO ASSESS IN CANDIDATES

The ability of a person to adjust and to live and learn effectively in a new cultural environment depends on many features of that new environment as well as on their personal qualities. AFS screening committees virtually never have detailed information about the new environment in which any candidate will be placed; therefore, the general nature of an AFS experience needs to be taken into account during the screening process. AFS students are totally immersed in an unfamiliar culture. In the case of student programs, they live as the adolescent children of a host family and, in most cases, attend secondary school. A situation such as this is demanding and sometimes stressful; the task of the screening committee is to insure that the candidates it recommends are likely to live and learn effectively in these circumstances.

AFS's many years of practical experience as well as the findings of research studies have shown the following nine personal qualities to be especially valuable in enabling people to meet the challenges of an extended intercultural living experience. (The order in which the nine qualities are presented below is not necessarily significant.) No candidate will possess all nine qualities to a high degree. But every candidate recommended to AFS should be characterized by all nine qualities to at least a moderate extent. In other words, any candidate who is found to be seriously lacking in one of the following personal qualities should be very carefully evaluated; if special strengths in several other qualities are not present to compensate for the deficiency, the candidate should be rejected.

QUALITY 1

CANDIDATES SHOULD BE FLEXIBLE

In the host country, AFS students will find that they need to make adjustments in their patterns of behavior to suit the many new situations in which they constantly find themselves. They will have to give up some of the routines to which they are accustomed and adopt many of the patterns of the host society and host family. The ability to be flexible in one's behavior is essential if intercultural learning is to occur and a satisfactory adjustment is to be made. Candidates who are incapable of altering their behavioral patterns to accommodate others are likely to have serious difficulties in their host country.

What to ask about and look for:

- Pay special attention to candidates who are accustomed to having their own way in most circumstances. Their flexibility most likely has not been tested, and they may find it difficult to adjust to the host culture or to their role in the host family.
- Try to assess the candidates' willingness to attend religious services of a different faith or denomination with their hosts. Would such attendance be regarded as an imposition, or can the candidates understand that attending services could be an opportunity to meet people and learn more about the host culture and its value?
- Determine to what extent the candidate may be willing to accommodate the host family's requests, such as sharing a bedroom or not smoking.

QUALITY 2 CANDIDATES SHOULD BE SELF-CONFIDENT AND WILLING TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE

An AFS experience is challenging and sometimes stressful. In order to cope with its demands, participants need a positive self-image. They need to have confidence in their own abilities. They cannot be afraid to try something new. People who are self-confident are those who have faced demanding situations in the past and usually have dealt with them successfully. They feel good about themselves because they know from experience that they are capable of coping with difficult challenges. Consequently, they are willing to take risks; if they do not meet their own expectations on the first attempt, they are not too discouraged to try again.

What to ask about and look for:

- Try to assess the self-confidence of candidates by observing all of them together in a group, especially a group in which there are other people who are strangers or mere acquaintances. With respect to each candidate, check:
 5. Is this candidate at ease?
 6. Is the candidate able to initiate conversations?
 7. Does this candidate participate in group activities?
- Obtain additional information about self-confidence by studying the application forms and through the personal interviews. With respect to each candidate, check:
 1. What kinds of demanding circumstances has this candidate faced in the past?
 2. How difficult were these circumstances, and how high were the candidate's expectations in terms of dealing with them effectively?
 3. How well did the candidate actually perform in coping with these challenges? For instance, how well did they deal with a school course that initially seemed very difficult?
 4. How effectively has this candidate handled a troublesome social relationship or reacted to a family crisis?
- Look for concrete examples in which the candidate has developed their self-confidence. Beware of candidates who are boastful; boasting is often an indication of a lack of self-confidence.
- Keep in mind that effective self-confidence is grounded in a realistic understanding of one's limitations as well as one's strengths. Therefore, finding out how a candidate compensates for their recognized limitations might be especially useful in assessing self-confidence.

QUALITY 3

CANDIDATES SHOULD HAVE THE WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO LEARN IN A VARIETY OF EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Most AFS students attend school during their experience, but school is only one of many settings in which they need to be able to learn. Students should be able to learn from their daily experiences with host family members, peers, and others in their host community as well as from teachers. All AFS students will be better able to live effectively in the host culture if they are motivated to take advantage of many different kinds of educational experiences.

What to ask about and look for:

- Determine whether each candidate has shown an active interest in broadening the scope of their knowledge. In particular, has the candidate made any effort to find out about people and cultures in other parts of the world?
- Keep in mind these selection questions recommended by the participants in the 1984 AFS Workshop on Intercultural Learning Content and Quality Standards:
 1. Has the candidate attempted to learn a foreign language?
 2. Has the candidate demonstrated curiosity and perseverance by pursuing interests or developing talents or skills outside of the academic setting?
 3. Has the candidate attempted to excel in scholastic and/or professional pursuits?
- Note that it is not necessary for a student to have attained consistently high marks in school. Most important is the student's demonstrated willingness to make an effort to do well academically. Also important is the student's demonstrated scholastic aptitude, which should be high enough to ensure that they will be able to perform reasonably well the academic work required by the host school.

QUALITY 4

CANDIDATES SHOULD BE ABLE TO TOLERATE CONFUSING OR AMBIGUOUS SITUATIONS, AND TO ASK FOR AND RECEIVE ASSISTANCE FROM OTHERS

Entering a new culture, community, and home brings every AFS student into circumstances that, at least initially, are confusing or ambiguous. Such situations are extremely frustrating for some people, leading them to become frightened, angry, hurt or withdrawn. These reactions are understandable but can hinder a person's adjustment to the new culture by straining their relationships with members of the host society. Furthermore, if the participant is reluctant to ask for and receive assistance from host nationals, misunderstandings may persist. Dealing with ambiguity and confusion will be easier if the student is patient and has the ability to remain calm and self-

possessed, and is willing to ask for help in interpreting unfamiliar behaviors and subtle cultural clues.

What to ask about and look for:

- Try to find out how the candidate dealt in the past with situations that were confusing or ambiguous, or that were beyond his or her control. In such circumstances, were they able to ask others for assistance in order to understand correctly or behave properly?
- Determine the importance to the candidate of order and organization in day-to-day interaction with others. Does the candidate feel compelled to adhere rigidly to previously laid plans, or do they seem able to alter pace, change plans and "take things as they come"?
- Try to observe the candidates in group activities, for such observations may be useful in evaluating their tolerance for confusion and ambiguity. Pay special attention to candidates who react too quickly with anger or withdrawal when faced with circumstances they do not understand or that are beyond their control.

QUALITY 5

CANDIDATES SHOULD BE GENUINELY INTERESTED IN OTHER PEOPLE, INCLUDING THOSE WHO ARE CULTURALLY OR OTHERWISE DIFFERENT FROM THEMSELVES

It is very important for AFS participants to show respect for and interest in the people of the host country. They must not only pay attention to others, but also respond to others in a way that shows them they are valued. Students must be able to build relationships characterized by mutual trust and cooperation with a variety of types of people. Candidates who confine their trusting relationships to those highly similar to themselves may find immersion in an unfamiliar society to be especially difficult.

What to ask about and look for:

- Evaluate the degree to which each candidate has demonstrated a genuine interest in and respect for others, including people who are very different from them. Has the candidate developed relationships characterized by mutual trust and cooperation with people who are different from them in terms of ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, educational or professional attainment, cultural background, religious preference or age?
- Observe the candidates in group situations. Do they circulate among different kinds of people or remain with those most like themselves? Do they act respectfully towards other people of all kinds?
- Determine how the candidate would react to the possibility of living with a host family of a different race?

QUALITY 6 CANDIDATES SHOULD BE ABLE TO EMPATHIZE WITH OTHERS

Empathy is the ability to perceive a situation from the point of view of others. People with a strong ability to empathize are those who have made an effort to understand the cultural, social and psychological factors affecting others. Participants who are not accustomed to looking at situations from another person's perspective may find it especially difficult to live with and learn from people whose values and attitudes are very different from their own.

What to ask about and look for:

- Determine whether there have been times when the candidate made the mental effort to "put themselves in the other person's shoes" in order to understand better that person's ideas, values or behavior?
- Try to find out whether the candidate can state clearly and fairly the views of others with whom they disagree?
- Contact others who are frequently with the candidate. Do they find that the candidate shows a sensitive and thoughtful understanding of their feelings and needs?

QUALITY 7 CANDIDATES SHOULD BE OPEN-MINDED

Open-mindedness is demonstrated by a willingness to try to understand and appreciate (though not necessarily adopt) the values and beliefs of others. An open-minded person is not quick to criticize or judge others, recognizing that other people's basic assumptions and standards may be different from their own. In the host country, an AFS participant will encounter numerous people with different values and beliefs. If the student is not open-minded, they will be poorly prepared to establish relationships with others based on mutual trust and respect.

What to ask about and look for:

- Find out to what extent the candidate has had prior exposure to people whose values and beliefs are different from their own. Has the candidate been able to suspend judgement about a person with different ideas until the assumptions and standards on which those ideas are based could be understood?
- Keep in mind that some candidates may have had very little opportunity for contact with people with values different from their own. The absence of such opportunities should not be held against any candidate. On the other hand, it is important to determine whether such candidates demonstrate an understanding that their own values and beliefs may not be the only ones that make sense.

QUALITY 8 **CANDIDATES SHOULD BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH MANY OTHER PEOPLE, AND TO SHARE THEIR PERSONAL FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS WITH A FEW OF THEM**

AFS students do not necessarily need to be highly sociable and outgoing, but they certainly should be comfortable in the presence of strangers and acquaintances as well as friends and relatives. Having a basically positive and accepting attitude toward others will go far in enabling participants to develop good relationships with many people in the host country. In addition, AFSers should be willing and able to develop confidential, trusting relationships with people. Sharing personal thoughts and feelings with someone whose opinion is valued is one way of finding solutions to difficult personal problems. AFS is aware that one's cultural values may affect their willingness to share personal dilemmas with others (especially with comparative strangers). Nevertheless, AFS's counseling support system cannot function unless students who are having difficulties can explain their problems and express their frustrations to whomever is in the helping role. Therefore, it is important for screening committees to understand how the candidates deal with people who are in a position to help them resolve dilemmas or find solutions to frustrating interpersonal problems.

What to ask about and look for:

- Observe the candidates in a group situation. This is a particularly useful way to determine how comfortable each is in the presence of others.
- Note that it may be difficult to determine, by talking to the candidate, the extent to which they confide in a few trusted people. Natural parents, teachers, clergy or youth group leaders may be able to help provide this information.
- Find out through observation or contacts with others who know the candidate whether they share feelings or internalize them, and how they express strongly felt emotions.
- Remain alert for clues that may arise from the manner in which the candidate responds to the personal interview. A candidate who is guarded or reticent throughout the entire interview may be the kind of person who would have difficulty trusting AFS counselors and other support personnel in the host country.
- Find out as much as possible about the way in which the candidate relates to each member of their sending family.
- Pay special attention to candidates who have had to deal with family crises, such as divorce, serious illness, death or other major tensions within the family. Evaluate how well the candidate has adjusted under these circumstances.

QUALITY 9 CANDIDATES SHOULD HAVE THE ABILITY TO SEE THEMSELVES WITHIN A LARGER PERSPECTIVE

People who take themselves very seriously and who are highly subjective in evaluating others are likely to cause considerable distress among their hosts when living in a completely new cultural environment. People who can see themselves in perspective—that is, see themselves objectively in relation to others and to their entire social context—have a valuable capacity for maintaining an even temperament and for resolving interpersonal misunderstandings and disagreements. When small problems are overblown into major personal crises, the finding of solutions acceptable to all becomes difficult. An AFS student needs to be able to understand ordinary daily problems in context, viewing them with a sense of humor and with a sense of objectivity that makes compromise solutions acceptable.

What to ask about and look for:

- Observe the candidates in group activities. Identify those who become overly concerned about small problems and minor embarrassments.
- Try to determine through observation, or through contacts with adults in the community who know the candidate well, whether the candidate is sometimes able to laugh at themselves instead of insisting on their own point of view.
- Try to determine in the same ways whether the candidate is able to resolve disagreements or conflicts with others through mutual accommodation or compromise.
- Pay special attention to candidates who consistently attempt to settle minor differences with others by insisting on their private needs and views.



THE PROCESS OF SCREENING CANDIDATES

The following guidelines are recommended for those in charge of organizing screening committees and carrying out the screening process.

Screening committees should be composed of mature adults as well as young returnees. While recent returnees can make a valuable contribution in screening candidates, no screening committee should be composed entirely of young returnees. Mature adults view candidates from a perspective based on longer life experience, and may be better able to assess their ability to relate to adults in the host country.

Information about candidates should come from a wide variety of sources. The personal interview and the family home interview are important tools for information-gathering. These interviews also provide an opportunity for the screening committee to convey vital information to each candidate and his or her family about the nature and purpose of AFS programs.

In addition, screening committees should deliberately create opportunities to observe candidates in group activities with adults as well as with peers. Seeing how a candidate interacts with others (especially with comparative strangers) in informal situations can reveal much about the candidate's personality and interpersonal skills. Screening committees should plan events such as community service projects, visits to culturally different neighborhoods, international cooking parties, simulation games, or even candidate exchange home stays in order to observe the candidates' behavior.

Other sources of information about the background and behavior of the candidates should be consulted whenever possible. The more sources of information committee members have regarding candidates, the better able they will be to identify those candidates for whom participation with AFS would not be appropriate.

Candidates and their natural families need to be fully informed about the true nature and purpose of the AFS program. For example, they need to know that AFS does not provide an opportunity for an exciting vacation or an adventurous travel experience. Intercultural learning is the underlying purpose of any AFS program. Intercultural learning occurs when participants are immersed in a new environment that challenges their personal values and assumptions, and that compels them to develop rapidly their abilities to acquire cultural knowledge and to form relationships with people unlike themselves. AFS is there to offer opportunities for structured reflection on these experiences and processes.

Providing this information is a legitimate function of the screening process because it may enable unsuitable candidates to eliminate themselves from further consideration. Therefore, screening committee members should be familiar with the AFS educational goals and should discuss them with each candidate and his or her family.

It is important for sending family members to fully understand the nature and purpose of an AFS program so that they can knowledgeably support the candidate, not only at the time he or she is applying to AFS, but also during and following his or her experience away from home.

Screening committees should be wary of situations in which either the candidate or the sending family seems to be reluctant about AFS participation, or to oppose it silently. Deep reluctance on either side appears to increase substantially the risk of the participant's having an unsatisfactory experience in the host country.

B. Being Part of My Local Community

The following chart has been designed to help you identify how active you are in different areas during your AFS experience.

Please list below the activities/chores you do in each area.

	At home	At school	In the community	With friends	For language improvement
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

Once you are finished, share with others and discuss the following questions:

- *Do you feel you are doing enough in each one of these areas?*
- *What else could you do?*
- *What other chores could you help with around the house?*
- *Are there clubs, associations, after-school classes you could join?*
- *In what other ways can you be more involved in your host culture?*

Remember, the more active and engaged you are in everyday life in your local community, the more you will learn and benefit from this experience.

C. The D.I.V.E. Model: Describe, Interpret, Verify, Evaluate

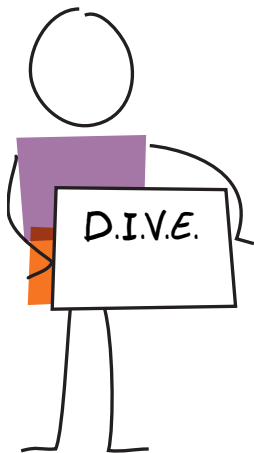
This model is based on the D.I.E. (Describe, Interpret, Evaluate) exercise by Janet Bennett

With all of the cultural (and personal) differences that we encounter daily, it is necessary to have practical strategies for when we are confronted with them, or even in general, when we find unclear circumstances or something feels “strange.” D.I.V.E. is one of the tools that can help students in these situations. The following is a summary of the approach and how to use it. For a complete learning session outline that can be used in orientations, please refer to the *What Every AFSer Should Know about Intercultural Learning™ 2.0* (available in the ICL Library at iclibrary.afs.org).

The objectives of this strategy are to be able to:

1. **distinguish between descriptions, interpretations and evaluations,**
2. **produce neutral descriptions of situations,**
3. **evaluate own and others’ cultural interpretations,**
4. **validate interpretations,**
5. **respond effectively and appropriately within an intercultural interaction.**

There are many examples of intercultural interactions that involve a misunderstanding and/or confusion. In the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections, you will be helping the student overcome these misunderstandings by guiding him/her through the four steps of the D.I.V.E. model:



- **DESCRIBE** = What you see:
What are the elements of the situation you can observe? Try to be as objective as possible and only stick to the facts.
- **INTERPRET** = How you make sense of what you see:
What are your assumptions about what you described? How would you characterize it?
- **VERIFY** = What deeper insights others can provide:
As a support volunteer, you can be the cultural informant to help the student understand the situation. Ask the student: What are the ways you can check if the interpretation is accurate?
- **EVALUATE** = What value judgments you give to this situation:
How would you qualify and judge what you see?

Discuss the student’s observations:

- What other ways are there to describe the situation?
- What are your observations of the perceived behavior?
- How did your evaluation of the situation influence your action?

D. Sample Orientation Learning Session Outline

The following session has been designed as an example of how AFS organizations can use the *AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum* to design activities for the different touch points. This example shows how communication skills, culture knowledge and awareness, global understanding and commitment to contributing to the world community can be addressed in a 90-minute session at a mid-stay orientation.

HOW DO CULTURES LOOK AFTER THE ENVIRONMENT?

AFS STUDENT LEARNER JOURNEY TOUCH POINT

Orientation: mid-stay

TIME NEEDED

90 minutes (depends on group size)

GROUP SIZE

Any size

RESOURCES

Flip chart paper sheets,
Markers,
Pens,
Crayons

AFS EDUCATIONAL GOALS

8 INTERPERSONAL: COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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

11 CULTURAL: CULTURE 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.

15 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.
- 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.

STEP-BY-STEP SESSION OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION - 5 MINUTES

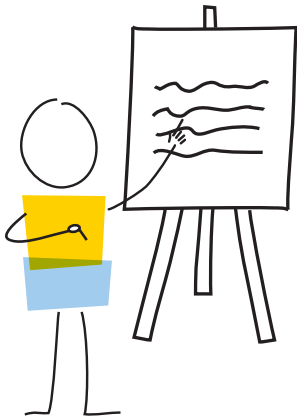
Start the session by reminding the students they are already halfway into their experience and that they have already experienced and learned a lot not only about themselves, but also about their host culture. One of the most interesting things about how much they have learned is that sometimes they are not even aware of it.

In previous sessions and orientations we have talked about cultural differences and how the things/artifacts we see on the surface are usually connected to deeper values and beliefs. For example, how the rooms are distributed in a house or how people wait in line can be related to the way people relate to each other and the community. It could also be linked to the concept people have of personal space and time, etc.

In this session we will dive into the relationship cultures have with the environment.

MAIN CONTENT - 75 MINUTES

Depending on the size of your group, either pair or group students (up to four per group). Have (flip chart) paper sheets prepared with two columns for *home culture* and *host culture* written on them. Distribute markers and ask students to discuss answers to the following questions for both cultures:



- *How is waste separation and recycling done?*
- *Are there any energy-saving activities and/or conversations in your home and host families?*
- *How is public transportation organized?*
- *How much space does sustainability take in the media (newspapers, social media, TV, etc.)?*
- *Is there any discussion regarding these topics at school?*

Give students 20 to 30 minutes to work on the questions then ask groups to report back on answers. After each group's report, allow time for comments and questions.

Once all groups have presented, set two tables with a piece of flip chart paper in the middle and crayons around. In the center of each paper write one of the following questions:

- *What does this all say about the relationship of people with the environment in different cultures?*
- *What can you as individual do about this?*

Ask students to silently reflect on these questions and use the crayons to share their insights in the form of words or drawings.

Once everyone has had a chance to write/draw on both sheets, get the group back together and review their thoughts. First discuss the cultural elements they could identify and then move on to their potential role in the situation.

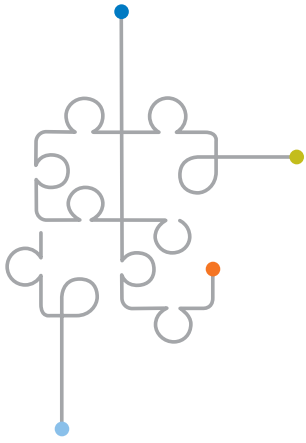
Using some of the ideas from the last question: *What can you as individual do about this?* ask students to brainstorm possible activities where they can get

involved in contributing to the community in some of the issues discussed. Write all ideas on a flip chart sheet and leave it somewhere visible for the rest of the orientation.

WRAP UP - 10 MINUTES

Close the session by encouraging students to further discuss or brainstorm opportunities for more community involvement along these lines with their host families, schools and friends. Also, let them know that their support volunteer can work with them to help them find an organization or group to put these ideas into action and make it a meaningful learning experience by offering debriefing opportunities.

Share with students some online links, articles or documentaries about the environmental topic in the host country.



Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections Tools and Guidelines

- A. AFS Educational Impact Assessment Pilot
- B. Recording Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections
- C. When is it Time to Involve the AFS Support Staff?
- D. What to Do When There is a Crisis
- E. The Situation, Options and Consequences (SOC) Framework for Student Guidance

A. AFS Educational Impact Assessment Pilot

AFS is currently running a pilot program aimed at assessing the student's learning progress and outcomes.

Helping students monitor their learning progress towards the *AFS Educational Goals* is one of the four pillars of the AFS Educational Approach.

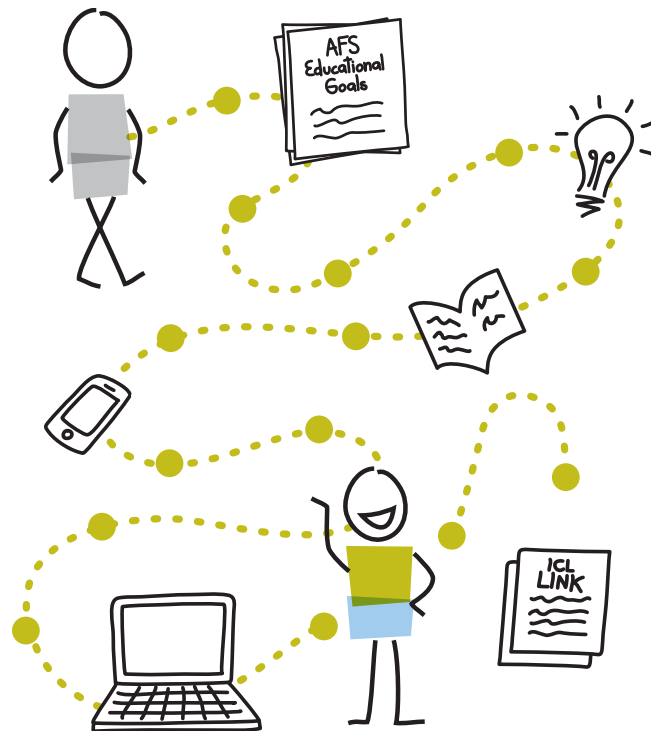
Over the years, AFS has conducted its own research and collaborated with experts in the field to organize summative assessment studies that measure the impact and efficacy of its programs. The AFS Educational Impact Assessment Pilot was launched in 2014. Building on AFS's previous experiences with assessment it is an ambitious project aimed at creating a learner-centered and formative assessment framework. It provides practical tools to allow all AFS students to keep track of their learning during the AFS experience and to better articulate it afterwards. This new assessment framework will also allow AFS to make adjustments to improve our educational methods and activities.

Complementing the AFS Educational Methodology Review Project, the assessment framework provides support volunteers conducting Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections with additional information and tools to better understand and facilitate the learning processes of all students. Once the *AFS Learning Journey Curriculum* starts being used, this assessment will be adjusted to complement the curriculum.

In 2015, the assessment framework testing began with approximately 70 AFS students from nine AFS organizations. A subset (7 out of 16) of the *AFS Educational Goals* are being measured through self-reflection activities conducted on an e-portfolio platform, along with trained assessor feedback and state-of-the-art intercultural sensitivity and language proficiency instruments.

The pilot requires students to understand the *AFS Educational Goals* and to sign a Learning Commitment Form in which they confirm their willingness to develop intercultural skill throughout the AFS experience. Students create their e-portfolios, while two or three key volunteers from each pilot partner organization assign reflection tasks and assess students' entries throughout the *AFS Student Learning Journey*. The support volunteers have access to the students' e-portfolios and they use the reflections students share to get a better understanding of the students' current situation and to align their approach at the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections.

Since the goal for the pilot is to create a framework that will become a standard part of every AFS experience, it is foreseen that in the next phases support volunteers conducting the Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections will receive additional training to take on the assessor role as well. The end goal for these complementary projects is to improve and align all the learning touch points in the *AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum*, creating a seamlessly integrated immersive experience, with intercultural content delivered through AFS orientations, structured reflections through Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections and learning assessment conducted through e-portfolio activities.



B. Recording Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections

A key step to doing Monthly Contacts & Learning Reflections is reporting that the reflection took place and its main outcomes on the existing AFS Global Link form currently used only for monthly contacts. This chapter outlines how this happens and what it looks like in AFS Global.

Every support volunteer is expected to meet with the student and the host family assigned once a month and also to record the meetings' results following the current procedures. The student should be made aware that this is a part of the AFS program procedures.

This allows both sending and hosting AFS organizations to monitor the student's wellbeing and learning progress and agree on (early) interventions if needed. It also provides useful personal and contextual information to be used at different points in the experience and especially in the case of a crisis. Such reports are also essential if a crisis arises requiring decisions such as host family changes or an early return.

Global Link - Monthly Learning Reflection: Detail of *exchange student name*

Save
Delete
Cancel

Monthly Contact Detail

Contact Type: Hosted Participant Host Family Host school/Others

Date of Contact: (M/d/yyyy)

AFS Volunteer/Staff: **Person Contacted:**

Method of Contact: Personal Visit Telephone Group Activity

Comments and Rating
 In the box below, please comment on the participant's and/or host family's adjustment to the AFS program. Take into consideration the following factors:
 1) the relationship of the participant and the host family and his/her ability to respect and abide by family rules
 2) the participant's academic performance in school and his/her involvement in school, community and AFS activities
 3) the participant's language abilities
 4) the amount and types of communication the participant has with the natural family
 These comments should guide the overall rating you give to the participant's and/or natural family's experience to date.

Comments:

Rating: Very Good Good Fair Poor Very Poor

Notes on Comments and Rating

Very Good	= Participant is doing very well	Poor	= Participant needs further attention
Good	= Participant is doing well	Very Poor	= Participant needs immediate follow-up
Fair	= Participant is doing okay		

Progress along AFS Educational Goals:
 In which Learning Focus Area is the host student currently: dropdown list with all four areas

What AFS Educational Goals were addressed during your last monthly learning reflection with this student? dropdown list with AFS Educational Goals from the selected area

Please describe the host student's progress in intercultural learning and adjustment:

Rating: Very Good Good Fair Poor Very Poor

Save
Delete
Cancel

C. When is it Time to Involve the AFS Support Staff?

This section is a brief reminder of when to involve staff in support issues with exchange students. Check with your local AFS office to see if detailed local guidelines also exist (for example, in your organization's Support Handbook). If so, be sure to review these.

In the AFS Participation Agreement, AFS commits to informing the sending parents of any significant change in their child's welfare. In an age when students have the ability to quickly inform their parents of such changes, it is vitally important for support volunteers to keep their local AFS office informed of such situations as well*.

The following situations should be reported immediately to the local AFS office and if the office is closed, should be reported to the 24-hour emergency number (duty officer) for the AFS organization:

- Any sudden, unplanned family change no matter the reason for the change.
- Any significant medical issue such as injury, illness, hospitalization or psychological situation.
- Any incident where the student is a victim of a crime.
- Any incident where the student is suspected of committing a crime and/or is arrested.
- Any situation where the student and host family are having serious difficulties, especially if the student is not observing family rules.
- Any notice that a student is not doing well in school.
- Any time the area where the student is hosted experiences a natural disaster (earthquake, flood, severe storm, etc.) and it is reasonable that someone far away would be concerned for the student's wellbeing.

It is important to recognize that although the student may contact the sending parents with information, the students who have experienced a traumatic incident of any sort may filter what they tell their parents and it is the responsibility of AFS to present as clear a picture as possible of the facts as well as the support being given to the student. It is worth nothing that although support volunteers should make an effort to remind the student of their support and learning facilitator roles, sometimes students do not realize that the person giving them support is an AFS volunteer responsible for monitoring their wellbeing (the student may think of you as a friend). Thus, in situations such as the above, verbally confirming your AFS role to the student as a support volunteer as well as giving a full and clear report to the office is vital.

*Note: Remember that sending parents expect to hear from AFS about issues. If they hear only from their child, they will only get one perspective on the issue. Therefore, it is important for volunteers to share the facts and impressions with the office in a timeline fashion to help AFS best support both the student and their parents.

D. What to Do When There is a Crisis

Following are required action steps for all support volunteers when a student (or host family) situation becomes serious.

When you determine that a situation has escalated to the point of serious concern or crisis, communication is key. Be sure that you as a volunteer know how to contact the following four parties: the student, the host family, other local volunteers and your national AFS office. Your national AFS office has a 24-hour emergency phone number (duty officer number). We recommend you keep all of these numbers handy, i.e. add them to the contact list in your mobile phone.

Additionally, please make note of the following key requirements and considerations:

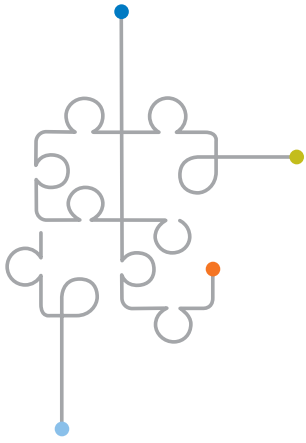
- If a student or host family member calls you about a medical emergency, make sure that the participant goes to see a doctor and get as much information as possible regarding where the participant is going, for example, the name and location of the hospital, etc.
- If a student reports that the words or behavior of someone in the host family is making them uncomfortable and compromising their feeling of safety—including inappropriate sexual behavior or open use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes within the host family home—you must move the participant immediately to a safe place while you learn more about the situation.
- If a student is arrested, it is important to be sure that they get legal advice right away so that their legal rights are understood and respected. If the national AFS office needs extra assistance, they will contact AFS International.
- Any of the above situations (or similar) must be reported immediately to the national AFS office. Use the 24-hour emergency phone number if the office is closed but do not wait to communicate the situation.
- If a participant is moved out of a home for any reason and the office is closed, notify the 24-hour emergency number so that the office may contact the AFS sending partner. In this day of immediate communications, it is to be expected that a participant will notify the parents quickly, so AFS must also act very quickly.

E. The Situation, Options and Consequences (SOC) Framework for Student Guidance

Sometimes students are in situations where they feel there are no options and they have a hard time trying to find a way to deal with problematic situations. This is a three-step system for use by AFS support volunteers to help guide students through difficult situations.

- 1. Situation:** When students seek help from support volunteers, it is very common for them to start the story from the “I” (interpretation) or even the “E” (evaluation) side of things. *People don’t like me. My host sister is jealous, My host family does not think of me as part of the family, etc.* They can even call with what they think is the solution, *I want to change families.* It is therefore very important that we help them to understand what the situation really is. Help them share the situation using the D.I.V.E. model. Spend as much time as you need for students to describe the experience and then work as many interpretations as possible before verifying. Once the situation is very clear for both the student and the support volunteer, you can move to the next step.
- 2. Options:** Now that the situation is clear, ask the student: *What can you do in this situation? How can you navigate this?* Then have the student name or write down at least three ways of dealing with the described situation.
- 3. Consequences:** Finally, encourage the student to think of the probable consequences of each one of the action options they listed, and discuss these with them. Help them think in both positive and negative consequences of such options. This will allow the student to choose the most appropriate action without the support volunteer directly advising or telling them what to do. As a last step, the student and support volunteer can set a timeframe for the student to act and report back.

Situation	Options	Positive consequences	Negative consequences



Monthly Reflection Activities for the Student and Host Family

HANDOUT 1: Starting Life as a Family

HANDOUT 2: Cultural and Family Heritage
Discussion Guide

HANDOUT 3: Values and Behavior

HANDOUT 4: Non-Verbal Communication

HANDOUT 5: Communication Styles and the
Concept of Time

Handout 1: Starting Life as a Family

WHO IS IT FOR?

All family members living in the host home and the AFS student should participate in this activity.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please read this handout carefully and have an overview about this activity before your student arrives.

Decide in advance which family member(s) will explain the “house rules” to your student, who will show them around the house, who will assist them using electrical devices and so on. Be aware that this activity lasts several hours and plan on spending some extra time for follow-up with the student during the first days.

When the student arrives in your home, you will of course have many things to talk about and many questions to ask each other. These questions will help you get to know each other and learn to live together while sharing an intercultural experience. As you know, many of your family’s habits and daily routines may be quite different from those of your AFS student.

Remember that this is a lot of information for your student, especially if shared in a foreign language, and they might be tired both physically and emotionally when they first arrive. Take your time and split this exercise into small tasks that are conducted over several days, ideally following the order shared here. Don’t get impatient if everything is not understood the first time and you have to repeat things several times. This is normal and your patience will be appreciated by your newest family member.

Host families come in all shapes and sizes: not all have kids, some have extended family members living at home, etc. so feel free to adapt this exercise as appropriate for your specific family configuration.

Finally, if you find that your student’s language skills are weak, feel free to revisit certain items later and as often as needed.

1. FAMILY BASICS

- What should your student call you? What do your children (if any living at home) call you? (Mom/Dad or first name, etc.)
- Greeting words and habits vary from culture to culture. What do you say when you first see a family member in the morning, when you come home, when you leave home? Tell your student!
- Should your student have their own key? Show them how to open and lock the doors and which key goes into which lock.
- If possible, add the student’s name on the door/mailbox.



What does your student call their parents at home?
Do they feel uncomfortable calling you Mom and Dad right away?

2. HOW WE SHARE OUR SPACE (INTRODUCING THE STUDENT'S ROOM)

- Does your student share the bedroom with siblings or have their own room? Show them where your bedroom is and where your children and other family members sleep and spend time.
- Show your student where they can put clothes, shoes, books, plus how to open the window, close the curtains, turn on the air-conditioning/heating, etc.
- Share with the student the degree to which they may personalize their bedroom by moving the furniture, putting up pictures, etc. and what should be used to place items on the walls (for example, tape, pushpins, nails...).
- In some cultures the bedroom is only used for sleeping, in others it is also where you study and entertain. What are your habits? What do your children do? Show your student where they can do homework, read, listen to music and engage in hobbies.



Encourage your student to tell you whether their family at home lives in a house or apartment, how many people live there, what this place looks like, etc. Do they have photos of this to can share?

3. HOW WE STRUCTURE OUR DAYS

- At what time(s) do family members usually wake up on weekdays and on weekends?
- Do you wake your children up in the morning or do they set an alarm clock? How should your student handle this?
- When do family members go to bed? What time do you expect your student to go to bed on weekdays and on weekends? Do you have rules for this or does everyone do as they like?
- Do you respect certain hours as prayer or quiet times? Which ones and how does the family behave?

- At what time(s) may/should your student...
 - Use the Internet? Are there passwords?
 - Watch TV?
 - Listen to music?
 - Do homework?
 - Other?
- Do you have set times for the activities above? Are all family members free to do as they wish as long as they don't disturb others?
- How do you usually spend the time after dinner? With the family? With friends? Or does everybody go to their room? Let your student know!



Encourage your student to describe to you – over a meal, during a family meeting or just casually – their everyday life in the home culture.

4.HOW WE SHARE MEALS AND FOOD

Typical mealtimes	Weekdays	Weekends
Breakfast	_____	_____
Lunch	_____	_____
Snacks/tea/other	_____	_____
Dinner	_____	_____

- Do you have all or certain meals together with all family members? Which are these? Tell your student if they should be at home for lunch or dinner or get up early enough to have breakfast together.
- Are there fixed seats for every family member at the table? If so, show your student where they should sit.
- Do you have a “dress code” for meals (e.g. no pajamas for breakfast)? If yes, make sure that your student is aware of this!
- Do you thank the person(s) who cooked? If yes, what do you say?
- Ask your student whether they have any food allergy or religious restriction regarding food.
- Show your student what a usual portion is or how much family members normally take from shared dishes.

- What things may your student use in the kitchen (e.g. microwave, stove, dishwasher)? Show them how to use these devices. Should they ask first? What are they expected to contribute to in the kitchen (for example: clearing the table, washing dishes, cooking)?
- May your student help themselves to food from the refrigerator/cupboards between meals? Should they ask first? Show them where to find what!
- May your student take food outside of the kitchen? If yes, to which rooms? How do you handle this with your children?
- Will your student take lunch to school or be given an allowance to purchase lunch from the school cafeteria or similar? Or will they be expected to come home for lunch?
- Who will prepare the lunch (if applicable)?



Ask your student what they usually eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner and what their favorite foods are. Do they have lunch at school or at home in the home country? Which family members participate in meals?

5. HOW WE USE THE BATHROOM

- Show your student where they can put their towel, toothbrush, shampoo, etc. and where they can find towels.
- Explain how they are supposed to leave the bathroom after they are finished (door open or closed; fan, lights, heater off/on, etc.)?
- How long is your student allowed to take a shower? When, how often?
- For girls, explain how to discard used sanitary napkins and tampons. Is there any place to store them?
- Be aware of the fact that toilets and showers might function differently in your student's culture and that they might not be familiar with using yours. Show your student how to use the shower and which articles may be thrown in the toilet and which not. Make sure that they are fully comfortable using the bathroom!
- Which articles are used by all family members (e.g. soap, shampoo, brush)? Which are not?
- Will your student use the family supply of personal toiletries or should they purchase these on their own?



How is this handled in your student's family?

6. HOW WE HELP EACH OTHER WITHIN OUR HOUSEHOLD?

- What do you expect your student to do on a daily basis? Tell them!

- Make the bed
- Keep the bedroom tidy
- Keep the bathroom tidy
- Other:

- How do your children help in the household? Are there any chores you expect your student to do or share with their host siblings? Which ones?

- Take out the garbage/recycling
- Set/clear the table
- Do the dishes
- Yard work
- Walk the dog
- Feed the pets
- Vacuum or sweep the floors
- Other:

- Show your student where to put dirty laundry! How often do you usually wash clothes? Do you expect help with washing, hanging, ironing or folding laundry? Or does someone else do this?
- Is your student allowed to use the laundry machine? If so, please show them how to manage it. Should they ask first?



What are your student's responsibilities in their family home?

7. OUR HOUSE RULES AND HABITS

- Are there any areas of the home in which your student is not allowed? For example, parents' bedroom, cellar, etc.

- Are doors usually closed or open? Should they knock on the door when it is closed?
- Do you wear shoes in the house? Where, where not? Not at all?
- Do you accept smoking in the house or outside? Not at all?
- Do you have a cleaning person or somebody to help in the household? What does this person do? How should your student treat this person?
- What things may your student use around the house? Should they ask first?

- Sewing machine
- Piano
- Stereo
- Other:

- May your student use the phone to talk with friends from school? If so, for how long? At what times? What are the rules for your children?
- What are the rules for making long-distance phone calls? Should your student ask first? Are they expected to pay for each call? Should their parents call back? Do you use voice over Internet (Skype or another program) to call via the Internet?
- What are the family's rules regarding Internet usage? Did your student bring their own laptop or can they use the family's computer? For how long and how often? When? Should they ask first?
- What habits do you have for watching TV or playing video games? When and how often may your student watch TV? Which broadcasts are OK, which are not?
- Do you have other house rules? Think of punctuality, tidiness, etc.



Take the opportunity to ask your student if they have has any additional questions and remember to encourage them to share with you how these issues are normally addressed in the home country.

8. OUR ACTIVITIES WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

- Is your student allowed to invite friends to the house? If so, at what time(s) and under what conditions? What is OK spontaneously, what should be announced in advance?

Please make sure that this topic is not misunderstood: Of course, your student doesn't need to have a boyfriend or girlfriend. If your student does develop a romantic relationship, however, talk with them about your expectations. Where they can meet, what is appropriate sexual behavior from your perspective, whether you allow them to stay overnight. What do you allow for your own children?

- Do you want to be introduced to your student's friends? Where do your children meet with friends: at school, outside school, at a sports club, at home in the living room, in their bedroom?
- May your student go out with friends at night during the week or on weekends? If so, by what time should they return home? What are the possibilities to get home late? Which information do you expect your student to give you: when, where, with whom, how long, a phone number?
- What would be your position if your student meets a boyfriend girlfriend? Would you accept this? Do you want to know this person? Could your student invite them to your house? How would you handle this with your own children?
- Does the family share certain activities in which your student will be expected to participate? Think of attending sports games, community events, going skiing, etc.
- What role does the larger extended family (grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins, etc.) play for you? Do you expect your student to come and see them on weekends?
- Does the family attend religious services? If so, may or should your student attend them as well?
- If your student would like to attend religious services different from that of your family, how can you arrange for him or her to attend these services, if possible?

9. SAFETY ISSUES

- Is there anything your student should know about safe and less safe areas in the (part of) town where you live? Are there guidelines about where it is safe/unsafe to walk during the day, after dark? Show them on a map!
- How should a fire or other emergencies be handled? What are the telephone numbers of related emergency services? Put a list with important telephone numbers next to the telephone (e.g. police, fire responders, neighbors, relatives and friends living nearby, local AFS volunteers, national AFS office, AFS emergency cell phone).
- Where does your student find first aid supplies in the house?
- How do you secure the home? Lock the doors and windows? When you go out, do you always close the door with the key or only close it by pulling? Show your student what you expect them to do!
- How does your student best safeguard their belongings such as passport, bank cards, traveler's checks, camera?
- If home alone, how should your student respond to someone on the phone

or someone who comes to the door?

- What does your student need to know about traffic and pedestrian safety?
- What should your student do if they get lost in town or if they don't have the house keys and nobody is home?
- What should the student always carry with them (e.g. a copy of their passport, AFS ID card, host family's phone number)?
- Is there anything your student should know about the high school culture, school rules, race relations, other tensions?
- Are there activities, people, places your student should avoid? What should they find out about a party, concert, etc. before deciding to go?
- Does a curfew exist in your town?
- Do you have special recommendations for girls (e.g. going out in twos or in a group, not coming home alone late at night)?
- What is the legal age for drinking alcohol? How is it enforced? What repercussions may result from breaking this law?
- How is alcohol accepted in society? What is normal (e.g. a glass of wine for dinner), what is abuse? How can your student avoid being at a party where people abuse alcohol or other substances? Remember that AFS rules forbid consuming non-prescribed drugs, misusing alcohol, and expulsion from school, all of which can result in an immediate termination of the program. Check with your national AFS organization about any additional rules that may exist.

Handout 2: Cultural and Family Heritage Discussion Guide

WHO IS IT FOR?

All family members living in the host home and the AFS student should participate in this activity.

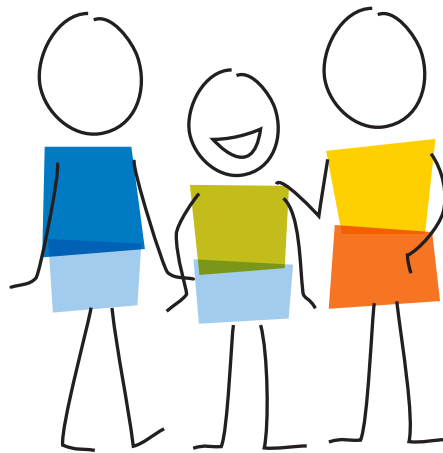
INSTRUCTIONS:

Using this handout, mark your answers to the following questions. It is possible to give more than one answer. The AFS student should respond as if they were in their home culture. Then, for every question, compare your answers and explain to each other why you selected the one(s) you did. Further questions and ideas in italics might help you!

Ask each other the following questions and take turns sharing your answers:

- Where does your family come from?
- What does your family name mean?
- What are some important events in your family history?
- What is important about your family that you would like to share with the other person?

You can also explore and discuss the similarities and differences you find between the two families and cultures.



Handout 3: Values and Behavior

WHO IS IT FOR?

All family members living in the host home and the AFS student should participate in this activity.

Developing relationships with people from different cultures is not easy. The unspoken rules of a society especially may be a challenge for you and your student. This exercise can help you to understand each other better.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Using this handout, mark your answers to the following questions. It is possible to give more than one answer. The AFS student should respond as if they were in their home culture. Then, for every question compare your answers and explain to each other why you selected the one(s) you did. Further questions in italics might help you!

1. What does it most likely mean if a person does not finish their plate of food at a meal?

- A. They don't like the food.
- B. They are politely showing that they don't want more food.
- C. They don't care about wasting food.
- D. They are impolite.
- E. We don't have plates, but share dishes.

Host family:

Student:

Explain to each other how you would indicate in a family setting that you like or don't like the food. How do you indicate that you want or don't want more food? What do you consider as "wasting food?" How much food should you eat? What kind of behavior at the table is impolite?

2. What does it most likely mean if a person closes the door to their room?

- A. They want privacy.
- B. They are sleeping.
- C. They don't like you.
- D. They are angry.
- E. They are unhappy.
- F. Nothing special.

Host family:

Student:

Explain to each other: Can everybody come in when the door to your bedroom is closed? Should people knock first? How do you express that you don't want to be disturbed? When do you leave the door open?

3. What do you think if a teenager is sitting in the parents' bedroom when the parents are not there?

- A. They should not be there.
- B. They are watching TV.
- C. Nothing special.
- D. This is very uncommon.

Host family:

Student:

Is the parents' bedroom a place that every family member can use or are children not allowed to go there? Are there family activities that only take place in the parents' room (watching television, for example)? What other rooms might be public or private?

4. At home, how do you generally know that the bathroom is available?

- A. The door is open.
- B. The light is off.
- C. Everybody is in another room.
- D. By knocking on the door.

Host family:

Student:

Explain to each other why you leave the bathroom door open or why you close it. How do you know that somebody is using the bathroom? Is the toilet room separated from the bath? Within a family, how much privacy is expected when using the bathroom? Is it common for siblings of the opposite sex to be in the bathroom at the same time? Is it common for each member of the family to have his or her private bathroom? What behaviors are seen as considerate of others when the bathroom is shared? Is it natural or is it embarrassing to talk about use of the bathroom?

5. What do you think if a person spends 30 or 45 minutes in the bathroom?

- A. Nothing, this is usual.
- B. They are wasting water.
- C. They have a date tonight.
- D. They are hygienic and concerned about their appearance.
- E. They do not consider people's needs.

Host family:

Student:

What is the appropriate amount of time to spend taking a shower or bath? Is hot water expensive or always available? What are the expectations of others who may share the bathroom?

6. What role does the family play?

- A. Young adults leave home and are free to pursue their own careers and interests and look after themselves. They get together with extended family for special occasions, but may not have much in common with others in the family.
- B. There are always some family obligations. In the family, you are part of a mutual support network and you must often give up your own interests for the good of the family.
- C. Ties with family are more important than any other obligations. Throughout one's life, a person is expected to call at any time to their family network for aid, comfort and advice and to provide this support as well.
- D. It depends on your role in the family (whether you are the oldest or youngest, a daughter or son, mother, husband, etc.).

Host family:

Student:

Which of these best expresses the role that your family has in your everyday life? Compare your results. Can you imagine why your answers are similar or different?

Handout 4: Non-Verbal Communication

WHO IS IT FOR?

All family members living in the host home and the AFS student should participate in this activity.

Developing relationships with people from different cultures is not easy. The unspoken rules of a society especially may be a challenge for you and your student. Nonverbal behavior cues can vary widely from culture to culture and can create some misunderstandings. This exercise might help you to understand each other better.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. First, the student shares with the host family what specific non-verbal behaviors have caught their attention over the past months. Then members of the host family explain each one of those non-verbal behaviors to the student.
2. Next, the host family teaches some typical gestures from the host culture and what they mean.
3. Finally, the student shares some typical gestures from their home culture and their meaning.
4. Please use the following questions to guide your conversation:

- What are the main differences and similarities regarding non-verbal communication?
- What is the ideal physical distance in the host and home culture?
- How do you think culture influences these aspects of communication and interaction?

Handout 5: Communication Styles and the Concept of Time

WHO IS IT FOR?

All family members living in the host home and the AFS student should participate in this activity.

Developing relationships with people from different cultures is not easy. The unspoken rules of a society especially may be a challenge for you and your student. Nonverbal behavior cues can vary widely from culture to culture and can create some misunderstandings. This exercise might help you to understand each other better.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Similar to the Values and Behavior exercise, using this handout, mark your answers to the following questions. It is possible to give more than one answer. The AFS student should respond as if they were in their home culture. Then, for every question, compare your answers and explain to each other why you selected the one(s) you did. The questions and ideas in italics might help you!

1. What would you be most likely to conclude if a person is not talkative?

- A. They are shy.
- B. They find it hard to know appropriate topics to talk about.
- C. They don't know the language well.
- D. They don't like you.
- E. They are unhappy.
- F. Nothing special.

Host family:

Student:

Do you feel uncomfortable if a person is not talkative? Why or why not? How do you behave in these situations? How do you know what the quiet person is thinking?

2. What do you think if people are talking loudly, if you don't understand the language?

- A. They are fighting.
- B. They are disturbing others.
- C. Nothing special, people always talk loudly.
- D. What they are saying is important, they want to emphasize it.
- E. They should speak softer. Everybody can hear what they are talking about.

Host family:

Student:

Is your normal speaking voice loud or soft? Do you have to strain or move more closely to hear your AFS participant when they speak? Does it feel that your host family is shouting at you? (or vice versa) Under what situations might you talk more loudly than you do now? When might you speak more softly?

3. You are invited for dinner at 8 p.m. What time do you arrive?

- A. At half past seven, to help set the table.
- B. At five to eight, just in time.
- C. At quarter past eight, so that people have enough time to have everything ready.
- D. Between half past eight and ten – at some point in the evening.

Host family:

Student:

When do you normally eat dinner? Is this the major meal of the day or a lighter one? In your own culture, how flexible or punctual do you need to be in this context? How is this determined?

4. How late can you arrive for a party?

- A. 5 minutes.
- B. 15 minutes.
- C. 1 hour.
- D. It doesn't matter.

Host family:

Student:

What is the etiquette when going to a party? In your own culture, how flexible or punctual do you need to be in this context? How is this determined?

5. How many minutes would be acceptable before you start thinking a bus/train is officially delayed?

- A. 10 minutes.
- B. 1 minute.
- C. 4 minutes.
- D. 15 minutes.

Host family:

Student:

How does the public transport schedule work in both cultures? What are the possible issues affecting regular schedules in both cultures? What should the student do to make sure they catch the transport in time to meet their commitments?

6. How far in the future is your most distant planned private event?

Host family:

Student:

Is there any difference between family and other events? What are the factors that influence how much in advance we plan?.



Additional Resources

A. ONLINE RESOURCES

- AFS INTERCULTURAL LINK LEARNING PROGRAM

www.afs.org/afs-intercultural-link/learning-program

The official AFS Network-wide training and assessment program designed to help AFS volunteers and staff around the world become better facilitators of intercultural learning for students and families, as well as schools and other audiences.

- WHAT EVERY AFSEER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT INTERCULTURAL LEARNING™

go.afs.org/WhatEveryAFSerShouldKnowAboutICL2.0

This course provides an essential understanding of intercultural basics plus hands-on strategies volunteers and staff can use to work with the cultural differences they encounter every day. The *What Every AFSEer Should Know About Intercultural Learning™* training course combines the practical expertise developed by AFS over the past 68 years together with an introduction to key core academic theories on the subject to help volunteers and staff in their intercultural encounters -- whether in AFS, at the workplace, in the community or across borders.

- AFS DIGITAL INTERCULTURAL LIBRARY

icllibrary.afs.org

Intended for registered AFS volunteers and staff, this is a depository for education, intercultural learning and quality standards materials, projects and ideas from across the AFS network—whether at the partner, regional or international level, as well as from external resources. You can access it using your AFS Global account, or sign up for it at the home page.

- STANDARDS, POLICIES & PROCEDURES IN THE AFS GLOBAL LIBRARY

go.afs.org/StandardsPoliciesProcedures

This includes AFS standards, program content information and program process information, such as administration, preparation and participation information. You can access this by using your AFS Global account.

- ICL FOR AFSEERS & FRIENDS

go.afs.org/ICLforAFSers&Friends

This is a series of short, insightful articles on important intercultural topics featuring AFS's point of view. There are intended for AFSEers, educators and all

others who either are or would like to improve their intercultural competences and become involved with the AFS mission.

- **INTERCULTURAL LINK AND CONNECT NEWS MAGAZINE**

www.afs.org/news-and-events/afs-publications/icl-newsletters

medium.com/connect-intercultural-insights-for-global-citizens

This is the quarterly news magazine on intercultural learning in the AFS network. It features content shared by AFSers and guest writers, including information on trends in intercultural education, interviews with experts in the field and overviews of upcoming and previous conferences. You can sign up to receive magazine digital copy regularly by using the address provided above.

- **AFS EDUCATION & INTERCULTURAL LEARNING BLOG**

www.afs.org/blog/icl

This is a space for sharing ideas, articles, materials, news and recommendations related to intercultural learning from the AFS network and beyond.

- **ACTIVE MANUAL OF ACTIVITIES**

afsactivecitizens.org

This manual, created by the European Federation of Intercultural Learning (EFIL) in cooperation with AFS Intercultural Programs and aligned with this curriculum, is a good practice example of how the approaches suggested in the curriculum can be developed to address the objectives on the students learning journey related to active global citizenship. It should be used in conjunction with the AFS Student Learning Journey Curriculum to focus on the Global Realm of the AFS Educational Goals.

B. OTHER RESOURCES:

An Introduction to Intercultural Communication (1985) by John C. Condon and Fathi S. Yousef

Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication (2013) edited by Milton Bennett

Communicating Across Cultures (1998) Stella Ting-Toomey

Education for the Intercultural Experience (1986) edited by Michael Page.

Mapping the Broad Field of Multicultural and Intercultural Education Worldwide: Towards the Development of a New Citizen (2012) edited by Nektaria Palaiologou and Gunther Dietz

The Hidden Dimension (1966) by Edward T. Hall

The SAGE Encyclopedia of Intercultural Competence (2001) edited by Janet Bennett

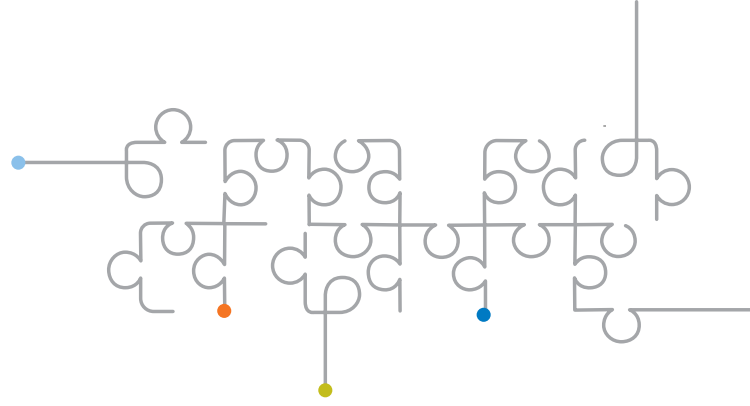
The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence (2009) edited by Darla Deardorff

The Silent Language (1959) by Edward T. Hall

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Argentine Australie Autriche
Belgique Bolivie Bosnie-Herzégovine
Brésil Canada Chili Chine
Colombie Corée du Sud Costa Rica
Croatie Danemark Égypte
Équateur Espagne États-Unis
Finlande France Ghana
Guatemala Kenya Honduras
Hong Kong Hongrie Inde
Indonésie Islande Italie Japon
Lettonie Malaisie Mexique
Norvège Nouvelle-Zélande Panama
Paraguay Pays-Bas Pérou
Philippines Pologne Portugal
Russie Rép. dominicaine Slovaquie
Rép. tchèque Serbie Thaïlande
Slovénie Suisse Suède Venezuela
Tunisie Turquie Uruguay



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