

Collaborating to Promote Best Practice in World Language Education, preK-8

Preparing for a Trip Abroad with Children

Dear Parents,

Traveling abroad with your children is one way to help them develop language skills and experience other cultures, but there is much work to do before you arrive in your country of choice. This issue of *Parent Connections to Early Language Learning* will focus on helping your family prepare for a trip outside of the United States.

The Destination

Have your children help choose where and when your family will travel abroad. This will give them a sense of ownership for the trip. Once a country is chosen, learn together about the customs, language and food of that country.

A visit to your local library or bookstore will provide guidebooks full of information. If you are unable to find print resources, there are a variety of websites available. A search for the country you plan to visit will yield a large amount of information.

The CIA World Fact Book is a website that provides information on 267 countries. Visitors to the site find information about the history, time zones, government, maps, flags, and the people.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

The Bureau of Consular Affairs provides information on every country in the world. Your family can learn more about the locations of the U.S. embassy, crime and security in the countries, along with entrance and exit requirements for U.S. citizens.

<http://www.travel.state.gov>

Passports and Visas

Everyone is required to have their own passport when traveling abroad including minors. It is a good idea to apply for a passport months in advance of the planned trip. Minors under the age of 16 and adults applying for their first passport are required to apply in person. The appropriate paperwork must be filled out and the fee paid for creating the passport. Requirements when applying for a passport for a minor include:

- Evidence the child is a U.S. citizen
- Evidence of a relationship between the child and the parents/guardians
- A photocopy of each parent's/guardian's ID
- Parental consent for the child to have a passport from each parent
- A passport photo

A passport must be valid for six months or longer beyond the dates of the trip when visiting certain countries. For more information about passports, visit the Bureau of Consular Affairs' website.

Some countries require visas when entering for any purpose. If a visa is required, the consulate's website will list the requirements for obtaining a visa. Those requirements will likely include:

- A valid passport with at least one blank page
- A passport that expires more than 6 months from the date of your intended arrival
- Completion of a visa application
- A color passport photo
- A copy of a round trip ticket or scheduled itinerary
- Payment of all fees in the form of money orders, cashier's checks or certified checks.

Allow a minimum of 2 weeks to process visa applications and possibly more. Your family may need to enter the country within a certain time period of being issued a visa or else it becomes invalid. Make sure you have researched and understand all of the rules related to traveling with a visa.

Healthy Travels

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website provides information about how to keep your family healthy while traveling abroad. Within the site you will find:

- Vaccinations required for travel
- Health information for over 200 international destinations
- Suggestions for staying healthy and safe while traveling
- Information about diseases related to travel
- Ways to prepare for illness and injury abroad

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel>

Research the conditions of your destination that may affect the health of your family. Are you visiting an area of high altitude? What is the pollution level? Is the water safe to drink? Is the food safe to eat? Knowing the answers to these questions will allow you to make decisions that help keep your family healthy while abroad.

Before traveling, find out if your insurance policy applies overseas. Some policies cover emergency expenses. If yours does not, you may want to consider supplemental insurance for your trip.

NNELL can assist teachers, parents and administrators with learning and advocacy efforts. Contact your State Representative today. Information may be found at http://www.nnell.org/state_reps.shtml. We would love to hear from you!

This issue of Home/School Connection was written by Tammy Dann. It is full of tips and resources that can be found at www.nnell.org. Teachers may reproduce it and send it home in their students' backpacks. Send suggestions/comments to Tammy Dann, NNELL's Early Language Advocate: tdann@nnell.org

If anyone in your family has a preexisting medical condition, carry a letter from the attending physician which describes the medical condition and any prescription medication. Medicines carried overseas must be left in their original containers and be clearly labeled. Check with the foreign embassy before you arrive to make sure your medications are not considered to be illegal narcotics.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program is a free service offered by the U.S. government for U.S. citizens traveling or living abroad. Once signed up, you can enter information about your upcoming trip to receive travel updates and information about the country you will visit. Registering for the program makes it easier for the State Department to assist you in an emergency such as natural disasters, civil unrest or loss of a passport. Download the Smart Traveler app to always have the State Department's contact information and travel updates at your fingertips.

Conclusion

Traveling abroad with your family can be a positive and life-changing adventure. Make sure you begin working far enough in advance to make the trip preparation stress free and fun.