

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

Planning a Trip Abroad with Children

Dear Parents,

Traveling abroad with your children is one way to help them develop language skills. This issue of *Parent Connections to Early Language Learning* will provide you with information to help you plan effectively before you arrive at your destination.

Speaking the Language

One way to prepare your family for a trip abroad is to learn or review the language of the country you will visit (referred to as the "target language" for the rest of this issue). Libraries often have language learning materials available for check-out or language learning programs that are accessible for free by patrons. There are also many free online resources and apps to help with language learning (see issue 21, *Parent Connections to Early Language Learning: Language Learning as an Adult*, for more resources).

Set aside time to practice the language by making it part of your family's daily routine. There are many fun ways to practice the language as a family. Choose a meal where all family members are present and speak only in the target language. When you are in the car together, listen to music in the target language. During family movie night, watch movies in the target language. Make vocabulary bulletin boards around the house and then play vocabulary games as a family. Skype with a friend who speaks the target language or use an app to practice vocabulary.

Include culture study with your language practice. (See issue 22, *Parent Connections to Early Language Learning: Preparing for a Trip Abroad with Children*, for more resources). Learn how to order in a restaurant, the polite way to greet people you meet and how to ask for help. Look for resources to expand your understanding of the customs and cultures of the country your family will visit.

Making a Plan

Tourist Attractions

As a family, choose the places you will visit during the trip. Sight-seeing with children should be at a pace they can enjoy, which means you will see less in a day than when traveling only with adults. Choose one or two attractions each day, with time for relaxing built into the itinerary. Your family will enjoy the vacation more if no one gets overly tired from doing too much in one day.

Include child-friendly activities and sites in the itinerary. Visit a variety of tourist attractions that appeal to the interests of each family member. Often guide books will include special information about sites to see while traveling with children. A search for "traveling with children + (country of choice)", using your favorite search engine, will yield more ideas for child friendly activities.

When planning, check the schedule for the sites you wish to visit. Many museums have days during the week or month when admission is free. There are also days when the sites you wish to see will be closed. Knowing this information ahead of time

allows you to plan better, waste less time and be less frustrated while on vacation.

There are many unforeseeable challenges and joys to travel, from rain, to workers going on strike and shutting down all public transportation, to unexpected festivals or concerts. Create a plan that has enough flexibility in it to allow you to change it as challenges and unique opportunities arise. Make sure to include a mixture of indoor and outdoor activities so inclement weather does not ruin your trip.

Transportation

Learn more about how to get your family from the airport to the hotel and choose which form of transportation fits your family. If you plan to drive, figure out the best route to get from the airport to the hotel.

Decide if you will use public transportation or rent a car for the rest of the trip. Researching both ahead of time allow you to plan more effectively. Some cities have excellent public transportation at reasonable prices. Some sites may be far enough from your home-base that you wish to rent a car. Before arriving, learn about the requirements for car rentals. Many countries only provide cars that are manuals. Some people choose to get stick-shift driving lessons from their friends before renting a car that is a manual.

Lodging

Hostels, family owned hotels, and pensions are often available for lower rates than the Americanized hotels. House exchanges and rentals are becoming more popular. When looking for lodging, remember what is important to your family. Here are some things to consider:

- Will you access public transportation? If so, stay near stops for public transportation.
- Will you rent a car? If so, find lodging with a parking lot that is accessible or has on-street parking.
- What amenities are important to your family? Some hotels have pools, but are farther from tourist attractions.

Conclusion

There is much to do before you arrive with your family in a different country. Involve your children as much as possible to help build the excitement for this family adventure in a new country. Research and plan before you arrive, but remember that flexibility is a key element to travel.

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