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Introduction

In this edition there are two articles by Gill Bryant. The first is about welcoming a new family to a team, with practical tips for helping the children to settle in. The second one is written to help American educators to explain their education system to outsiders, and it includes links to some useful resources. This time there is an emphasis on understanding the UK education system, but we hope to include articles on different countries in future editions.

1. A new family for your team

How do we welcome families to our teams? There is so much for new workers to do, just to survive in a foreign place – registering with the authorities, coping with the climate, finding somewhere to live, meeting the team, working out where essential places are and how things are done, organising language learning and children's education…. Some of our experienced workers have recounted to us how challenging their adjustment period was, partly because the orientation for new team members did not address the needs of the children.

At the same time, the family may arrive into a time of crisis or challenge for the team, which means that those who are responsible for supporting them are limited and over-stretched. In these situations, disorientated children are in danger of being overlooked. It is to be hoped that in pre-field training parents will have been given ideas as to how to prepare their children for the transition to the new location. Resources such as '*Into all the world with children*' (write to us for more information about this) are there to help them.

While it is true that the parents should take the main responsibility for their children, it is also important that leaders and team members think about how they can help a new family to settle in, before they actually arrive. Ideally each branch or team could have someone who is responsible for this aspect of orientation. This person or couple could spend some time with the children and seek to ensure that activities such as those listed here are put in place.

Think about these things….

What is the climate like in your location? Make up a basic weather forecast for the year. It could be quite simple with twelve cards showing the weather in each month. For younger children this could be made into a memory game. When does it get light and dark, and how quickly? How is this different from where they have come from? Ask the children.

Which people groups live in your area or city? Collect some pictures of local people to show the children. For older children, show them the people groups on the Joshua Project.

Which languages are spoken? Teach them some greetings in one of the languages, and numbers one to ten. What will they hear around them? Talk about the call to prayer from the mosque, the shouting in the market, the noise of animals or traffic, or other unfamiliar sounds that they hear.

How do people behave in the street? For example, will they say hello or ignore you? Will they stare at newcomers and want to touch the children? Are the women covered up, or hardly outside at all? Are there dogs wandering about, or donkey carts, or lots of mopeds and taxis? Tell them about it before you go out with them.

Think about a place to visit. Is there a park, an ice-cream parlour, a local attraction that they might enjoy? Arrange for them to be taken there.

What do the local people do for relaxation? Try to find an appropriate way of observing or joining in with this, if possible.

Try some local food. Take them to a market or shopping mall so that they can see what is on sale. Teach them to cook a local dish.

Show the children some typical household items, toys or tools and ask them to guess what they are for. Why are these things important here?

If they have brought some of their favourite games, play these with them, or teach them a new one. Card games like Dutch Blitz and UNO are easy to learn.

If younger children have brought a special doll or teddy bear, this could be a bridge to deeper communication. With some imagination a ‘conversation’ could be held where the child is asked what their doll or teddy bear thinks about the new place.

Introduce them to other children. There may be another family in the team that they can visit, even if they are some distance away. However, don't expect every child to make new friends quickly. Some will be very sociable and the language barrier won't be a problem, but others may be shy and take time to build new friendships.

How do people live, and what are their houses like? If you can, take the new family to visit some local believers. Explain the situation to the children beforehand and try to see it through their eyes. Who will be there and how much attention will they give to the children? Do the people you are visiting live in a tiny apartment and will it be necessary to go up in a lift (elevator)? Will you be sitting outside on a bench while local children stare at you and the adults talk together in a local language? Might you be expected to eat or drink something that you have never seen before? Are there cultural rules that they need to know before they go, such as taking their shoes off?

When planning the orientation programme for the parents, create adequate time for the family to be together, and allow the children to express any negative feelings that they may have about being in the new place. It is really important to do this, to convey to the children that they are loved and their feelings matter, even when their parents are busy in the new location. The animation film '*Inside Out*' portrays this really well. A family moved from one part of the USA to another and the daughter lost all of her friends and familiar environment. The parents were overwhelmed with trying to cope with the move, but when they spent time with her and allowed her to feel sad and express herself, they enabled her to take the first steps towards life in the new place.

How is it going with the family?

It is good practice to have regular progress reviews for new workers. This progress review should include the children – how they are settling in, their physical and emotional health, and their educational provision. After the initial phase, it is still a good idea to have an annual review, and similar attention should be paid to the situation of the children. When home leave is due, or permanent re-entry is coming up, the review should include questions about preparation for this.

Help is available from the document *Review questions for families,* (write to us about this). The list of questions may seem lengthy but not all of them need to

be used – for example, there are questions relating to boarding or home schooling which can be used or not, as appropriate.

The discussion is not just a formality – it needs to happen within an ongoing relationship of trust. Agencies have a duty of care towards their children, which must be balanced against the responsibility of the parents to make decisions about family life. Leaders should intervene if they observe or anticipate real danger to the children from careless actions or negligence, but the central purpose in a normal situation is to provide support.

2. Truly international…..in the classroom?

Educators of TCKs need to be aware that globally there are many different education systems, each with its own underlying philosophy and emphasis. At a recent conference I learned that every Spanish-speaking country in South America has its own educational requirements, with a total of 26 systems, not necessarily compatible with one other. This is just one example. While it is too ambitious to expect that international schools and MK schools will always be able to offer a hybrid, multi-faceted programme, it is important that there is sufficient international understanding on the part of key staff members for all students to be encouraged to reach their potential.

In this article the focus will be on providing some tools to help staff in American schools to explain their education system to outsiders, and to develop their knowledge of other countries' requirements. As a start, we will look at the requirements of the United Kingdom.

Are you a North American teacher, a guidance counsellor or a school principal? How much do you know about education systems from countries outside of North America? How many of your students are from these other countries?

Don't assume that parents or new students will understand all of the words being used. Terms such as *study hall, transcript, tardy* or *grade point average* may be a mystery to the uninitiated.

There are some questions that it would be good to ask. Below, I have listed some of these questions, each linked to resources which may be helpful.

My educational system is the only one that I am used to. How might it be different to others, and how do I explain it to an outsider?

This website gives a helpful summary of the U.S. system:

https://www.studyusa.com/en/a/58/understanding-the-american-education-system

The link below is to a helpful booklet which can be used to explain the system to new parents and students.

https://isss.umn.edu/publications/USEducation/2.pdf

Together, these resources indicate the areas that are not obvious and need to be explained.

Non-Americans are applying to college in the U.S. How can I help them with this process?

The Fulbright Commission website has some helpful explanations. As an example, see this link, which explains what a transcript is all about and how to prepare one.

http://www.fulbright.org.uk/going-to-the-usa/undergraduate/educationusa-advice/applying/school-documents

We recommend Toni Summers Hargis's book. *The stress-free guide to studying in the States: a step-by-step plan for international students,* is a comprehensive guide to the college and university application process in the U.S. (Available from Amazon).

The British parents keep talking about International GCSEs. What are these and how do they relate to the High School Diploma?

This website from the University of Cambridge gives guidelines and information, linking to services which can be accessed to calculate a grade point average from a set of IGCSE results.

https://help.cambridgeinternational.org/hc/en-gb/articles/203477242-How-do-I-calculate-a-Grade-Point-Average-GPA-

What value do these IGCSEs really have in the United States?

Look at the following link to discover colleges that will accept students on the basis of their IGCSE results. 'A' levels are also mentioned.

https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/ncee/images/122955-cambridge-recognition-brochure-us.pdf

Do British students really need a higher level than the high school diploma get into university?

Yes, they do. A levels are not 'bonus' or 'honours' course giving college credits, as Advanced Placements do in the US. They are an essential requirement. See the following two websites.

First, the University of Manchester's admissions page for the USA gives a helpful explanation of the entry requirements for undergraduate courses:

Applying from High School

An undergraduate degree in England is only three years – rather than four – in duration. We do not teach any general education classes, meaning that you only study the subject area of your choice from the start. Entry requirements are transparent, and based on standardised test scores.

Exact entry requirements vary by programme; we generally require a minimum of all of the following to be achieved by the end of Senior Year:

- *1290 SAT OR 27 ACT*
- *4,4,4 in three AP test scores. SAT Subject Test scores of 650 or above are considered as an alternative to AP test scores for entry to many of our programmes.*

https://www.manchester.ac.uk/study/international/country-specific-information/usa/entry-requirements/#country-profile

Secondly, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) describes the normal admissions requirements and explains the application process for British universities. All prospective students have to apply for their course through UCAS.

See this link: https://www.ucas.com/

While there are various equivalents acceptable as alternatives to 'A' levels, these do not include the American high school diploma. At the following link there is a booklet listing the equivalent qualifications recognised by UCAS from other countries around the world. The statement for the USA is on page 70 and it reads as below:

United States of America

This entry was reviewed for the 2015 qualifications guide. [There does not seem to be a more recent edition available online –G.]

EVALUATION

High School Graduation Diploma

On its own, at a minimum, can be considered acceptable in lieu of GCSE (grades A, B, C) provided an average grade C is obtained in subjects which have counterparts in the GCSE syllabus (see Education System below). College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) Tests Minimum of 600 in writing, critical reading and mathematical elements of the SAT Reasoning Test and a minimum of 600 in relevant SAT Subject Tests taken or a score of 26 or higher in the ACT (which covers English, mathematics, reading, science and writing) may be regarded as satisfying general entrance requirements.

https://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/2015-international-qualifications.pdf

While it is true that good SAT scores are considered essential, AP's in the most relevant subjects are also required.

Feedback

As always with Educare, we welcome your feedback. If you have comments on either of the two articles in this edition, please get in touch. **Educare** is a free e-magazine available to anyone who is interested in the welfare of Third Culture Kids – TCKs, their parents, other family members, sending organisation staff, and any other supporters. To subscribe directly contact this e-mail address mk_tck@yahoo.co.uk It is a ministry of WEC International.