

# Homestay Host Guide

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**aei** **NBISP**  
NEW BRUNSWICK  
INTERNATIONAL  
STUDENT PROGRAM

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Welcome to the world of hosting an international student. For the student, residing with you will be a highlight of their life. For you, it can be an enriching experience that makes an unforgettable connection.

Atlantic Education International (AEI) offers its New Brunswick International Student Program (NBISP), with homestay services, for recruited international students attending NB public schools. Although most of the students are of high school age, those who apply can be between the ages of 11-18. Revenues from fee-paying international students enable investments into school and district programs, NBISP operating costs, Homestay Coordinator payments and Homestay Host regular stipends to assist in offsetting expenses.

Over the past three decades, New Brunswick families have offered the opportunity for students from fifty-one countries to experience the good nature of our people and environment. Thank you for making that possible for your student(s).

Your Homestay Coordinator will have inspected your home for student comfort and safety and will have discussed many of the matters covered in this booklet. Much of the content of this New Brunswick document has been licensed and customized from *The Essential Guide for Host Families*, authored by Doug Ronson, Canadian educational publisher of *The Homestay Times*. We have referred also to the *Host Parent Handbook* published by the International Student Programs of the Campbell River School District on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Additional points from other NBISP documents and presentations have been used.

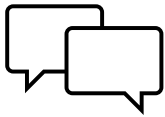
This document offers guidelines about hosting an international student. It is not intended to provide specific legal, medical or counselling advice. Homestay Hosts are encouraged to use their best judgement and to contact their Homestay Coordinator or an appropriate professional when they need support.

This guide is intended to help homestays have a fabulous experience. It is important to have realistic expectations, to understand the rights and responsibilities of both the host and the student and to reflect on the student's perspective.

If you are unsure about any issue, it's always a good idea to consult with your Homestay Coordinator. Handouts available through your Homestay Coordinator can provide additional guidance; see a summary at the end of this document of the handout content from "How to be a Successful Homestay" and "Homestay Discussion Guide".

## **PREPARING TO WELCOME YOUR STUDENT**

Hosts should welcome their student without pre-conceived ideas and expectations. While it is useful to prepare yourself by doing some research into the student's culture, everyone is an individual and may not fit into the "typical" profile listed on a website. You will have an opportunity to converse with your student in advance of their arrival, although you must await contact from the student before two-way communication begins.



Hosting international students provides families with a great opportunity to share their culture, to learn about other countries and to make new friendships. You can expect a wide range of experiences and feelings during a student's stay with your family – joy, frustration, confusion, excitement, learning, cooperation and fun.

Before your student arrives, it can be useful to consider your expectations. Ask yourself why you want to host a student and take the opportunity to discuss this with your family if there are others in your home. Being a Homestay Host is a recipe for a multitude of emotions and experiences – great memories and some challenges. Often, a homestay student becomes a true member of the family, and this relationship lasts a lifetime. In other cases, the bonds are not as strong. Nevertheless, each homestay experience will provide you with a terrific opportunity for learning about your student, their culture and beliefs and ultimately about yourself.

If you have children, depending on their age, they can be involved in the conversation and learn to have realistic expectations. While some children hope that the student will be like a brother or sister, this is not always possible. The student may not have anything in common with your children, especially if there is a significant age difference. The experience will be an education for your children. In most cases, children learn to enjoy a broader range of food or customs and gain respect for people who are different from them.

Be prepared and be open. Some cultures are more reserved, and students may not be demonstrative in their feelings for the homestay members. Other cultures are more outgoing. You can form great relationships with both types of students – they will simply be different. Remember that each student is an individual, with their own feelings, personality, and perspectives.

Ensure you make space for the student, with an empty closet, dresser and place to do their homework.



## WHEN YOUR STUDENT ARRIVES

Your Homestay Coordinator has accepted you as a Homestay Host and sent you background information about your student. Your student has begun contact with you. The Homestay Coordinator can confirm with you the student's arrival time and mode of transportation. If the student contacts you with changes in flight or arrival information, please inform the Homestay Coordinator, as they may not have the most current update. You are encouraged to be at the airport for your student's arrival, if possible, to welcome them. Discuss with your Homestay Coordinator what arrangements work best for all involved.



Here are some guidelines to getting the relationship off to a good start:

- **Smile:** Offering a warm and friendly welcome is important as your student may be feeling anxious about living with a Canadian family.
- **Special welcome:** Make an extra effort with your student by posting a sign on the front door, making a special meal, offering a welcome basket with treats.
- **Speak slowly:** Even though your student may have studied English for many years, they may not be used to listening to native speakers. Talk with an easy pace and stick to simple vocabulary and sentence structures.
- **Limit expectations:** Your student has likely just arrived in Canada and may be feeling jet-lagged and disoriented. Therefore, it is best to allow them some time to ease into family life.
- **Orientation:** Provide a brief tour of your home on the first day so the student knows where everything is. Show them their room and make sure they have all they need.

On the second day, when the student is feeling more rested, you can provide a detailed explanation of the household appliances and features.

Talk with your student about why they have come to Canada. Their goals could include improving their English, qualifying for a North American university, experiencing local culture, sightseeing and trying new activities. Once you have an idea about what the student hopes to achieve and experience, you can make a plan with them. Your student will have their own expectations about homestay – sometimes these are realistic and sometimes they are not. If you are able to discuss these with your student, you can help them to understand what is achievable.



Before your student arrives, take some time to learn about their life and their native country. This will help you to appreciate their viewpoint and to support them in adapting to Canadian ways. It will also provide a starting place for “Tell me more about . . .” conversations.



Students usually use a credit card or debit card from their banks at home. Please help them find a convenient ATM or bank in your area. Students are responsible for their own purchases and financial matters. Homestay hosts do not accept money from students.

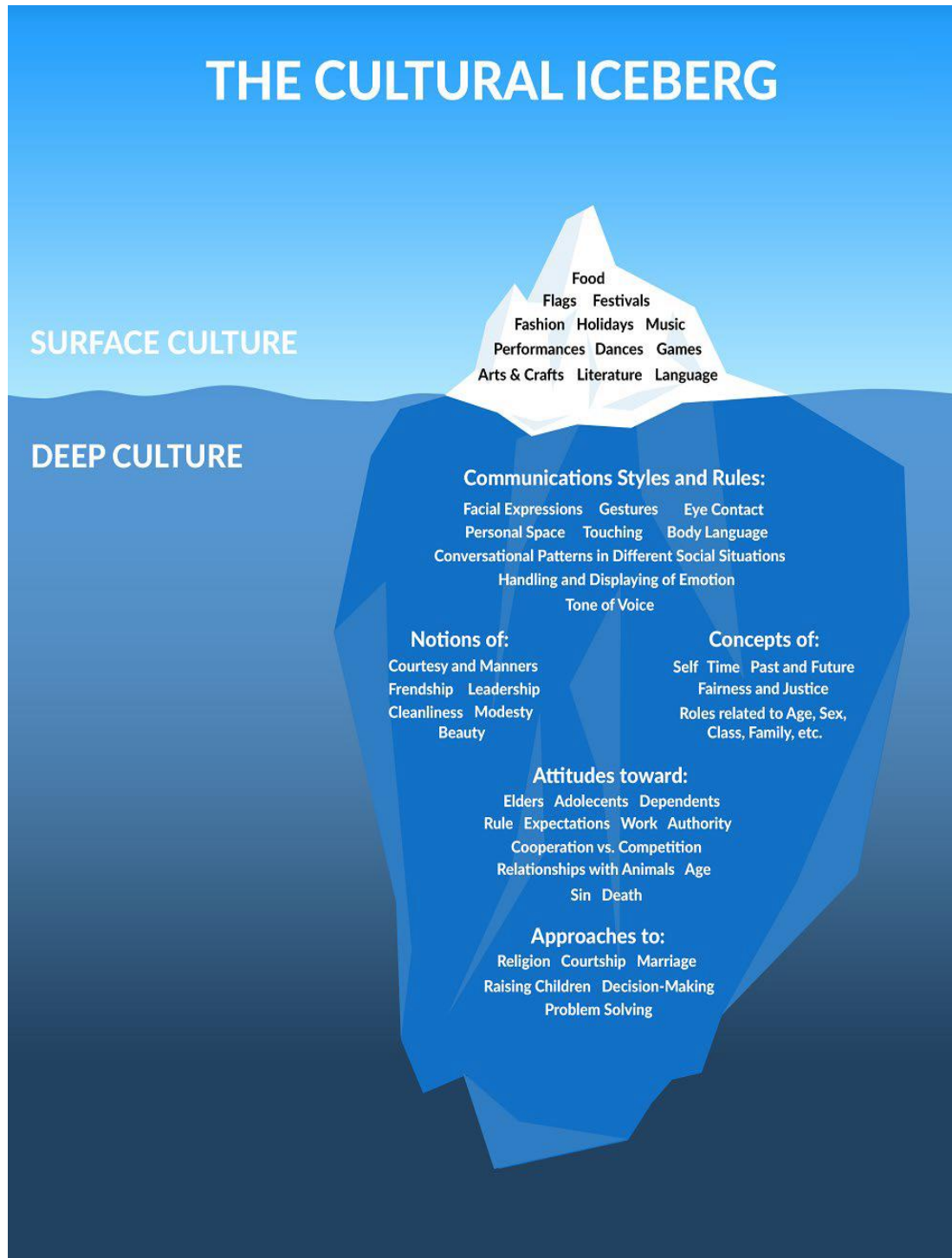
### **CULTURE SHOCK AND ADJUSTMENT**

When one family began hosting international students, their first homestay student stayed in her room all the time, emerging only for family dinners. At the table, she would offer only one-word answers to their questions. They were baffled initially and only realized later that she was suffering from culture shock.

Culture shock is a period of disorientation people face when they move from one culture to another. It can be most extreme when the student is from a culture that is considerably different from Canada. For example, students from the Middle East or Asia may experience more dramatic culture shock than students from Europe.

Once again, it is essential to remember that each student is an individual. Some students may go through culture shock for several weeks, while others will adapt quickly. As a homestay parent, it is important to be patient and supportive.

So often we forget that our notions of “Common Sense” are really more about our culture. Our beliefs around aging, death, manners, and even notions of time are learned from a very early age, and we often forget they are a piece of our culture. The idea of “time’s a wasting” doesn’t even exist in many cultures. Consider the many aspects of “deep culture” in the following *The Cultural Iceberg* diagram created by anthropologist Edward T. Hall.



For example, manners can vary greatly in other cultures. Our “polite” Canadian way is not universal. You will likely have to model for your student some phrases that you like to be used:

“Please pass the ....”

“Would it be okay if I went out after school?”

“Would you mind picking me up tomorrow night?”

New customs regarding speech and behaviour may not come naturally to your student and especially not to students who are uncertain about their English. Be patient and positive.



**Culture shock usually includes several stages of adaptation:**

1. **Arrival:** The first few days can be disorienting and challenging. On the one hand, your student is excited to be in New Brunswick and to be starting a new educational adventure. On the other hand, they may be homesick, missing friends, family, and familiar foods. Jet lag can add to the burden as students may have trouble sleeping or face short-term illnesses. Recent research out of British Columbia has found that acculturation stress may be at its highest point when students arrive. Therefore, it’s essential to start building connections with students before they arrive and have supports in place for them when they arrive.
2. **Frustration and Anxiety:** This is a period where a student feels overwhelmed, preferring their own culture to that of New Brunswick, Canada. They may magnify the negative aspects of local culture and foods. Students may have trouble learning English, lapsing back into their native language with friends and family. They may spend excessive time communicating with family and friends in their home country, which can stall their adaptation. Students may hide in their rooms or only spend time with other students who speak their native language. The distress may not be constant but can happen in surges.
3. **Adjustment:** Over time, most homestay students adjust to living with a New Brunswick family. Unfortunately, it is impossible to predict how long the period of frustration and anxiety will last; homestay hosts need to be patient.
4. **Pre-departure:** Students often have mixed feelings about returning home. Hopefully, they have had a great experience in your home. At the same time, they will be looking forward to seeing their friends and family again. Some students will begin preparing for the reverse culture shock of seeing their native culture in the light of their Canadian experience. One family noticed that a normally gregarious student started to become much more reserved as the end of his sojourn



approached; when asked why, he stated that he was preparing to go back to his home country, where the culture was less open.

**As the Homestay Host, you can help your student adjust to culture shock by taking these steps:**

- Discussing it with the student: Explain that culture shock is a normal experience and that most students go through it. While some students will be reticent about sharing their feelings, you can do your part by being empathic and supportive.
- Being patient: The period of adjustment can last one to three months. Every student is different, and it is impossible to predict how long it will take. Nevertheless, be assured that most students eventually adapt.
- Keeping fit: Regular exercise can help your student settle in and manage stress. Invite them to join you for a walk, a bike ride or a visit to your local gym or swimming pool.
- Eating well: A good diet is essential to maintaining mental health. Within reason, try to purchase foods that your student enjoys. You can also suggest that your student cook a meal from their home country; familiar food can be very comforting.
- Communicating with home: Encourage your student to keep in touch with family and friends back home. This requires a careful balance. Students can receive support but excess interaction with those from their home environment can also stall integration and prolong the period of adjustment.



Your Homestay Coordinator can be a valuable resource in dealing with culture shock. They can answer any questions you may have and guide you in helping your student and in dealing with your own feelings and concerns.

Sometimes symptoms of culture shock can in fact be signs of more serious mental health concerns. As a homestay host, it is not your role to diagnose medical or mental health problems. However, if you are worried about your student, it is a good idea to raise the issue with the Homestay Coordinator. They will help determine if it is time to consult with others regarding the need for a medical or mental health professional.



## HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Many students have pre-conceived ideas about what Canadian families are like. They may expect that all families will be a mother, a father and a couple of children.

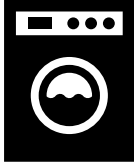
Of course, Canadian families come in a variety of shapes and sizes. There are single-parent families, mixed race couples, same sex couples, and families who are childless.

As a Homestay Host, you don't need to defend your family structure. However, be prepared and don't be offended if your student asks about it.

Students may come from a culture where someone else takes care of all the household chores, including cooking, cleaning and laundry. They may be surprised to see how your household functions. It is important to set out your expectations at an early stage – communicate to the student the tasks you will handle and also what you expect them to do. If you aren't clear, you will likely end up doing everything!

## STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Privacy:** Your student has the right to privacy in their room. You should not enter without their permission. If there is an urgent situation (such as smoke in their room) you can enter of course.
- **Cleanliness:** Your student should keep their room tidy and clean up after themselves in the kitchen and bathroom.
- **Respect:** The homestay members and student should treat each other with respect. There will be cultural differences, but it is important to be fair and kind.
- **Quiet:** It's reasonable to expect that your student will go to bed at a sensible time and keep noise to a minimum at night. If issues arise, be sure to communicate your expectations with the student and, if necessary, ask your Homestay Coordinator for assistance.



## HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES AND EQUIPMENT

For safety reasons, it is essential to explain the operation of any household appliances that a student may use. Even though many appliances are available worldwide, you should not assume that your student is familiar – their parents (or in some cases household staff) may be the only people to use them.

- Microwave oven: Demonstrate how your microwave works. Be sure the student understands not to put metal objects in the microwave. Show them which containers are microwave safe.
- Clothes washer and dryer: You should be prepared to do the student's laundry or to explain how the washer works. In some countries, dryers may be uncommon so it is important to tell your student which fabrics should be hung up to dry.
- Dishwasher: Show them how to load the dishwasher. Point out that there is special soap (one of the students ran the dishwasher with regular dish soap – and was shocked by the huge volume of bubbles that were produced!)
- Sink garbage disposal: If you have a sink disposal, show the student how it works. Emphasize that they should never stick their fingers inside the disposal. Tell them to ask for your help if the sink becomes clogged.
- Garbage and recycling: Explain how your community garbage, composting and recycling systems work. New Brunswickers can get quite confused about which item goes where – so it can be even tougher for your student.
- Blenders: Demonstrate how your blender works. Make sure they put the lid on tightly!
- Automatic garage doors: Indicate how the garage opens and closes. Again, for safety reasons, advise them to get you if the garage door gets stuck.
- Fireplaces: If you have a gas fireplace, show the student how it works. Students should not start fires in wood-burning fireplaces.
- Lawnmower, garden equipment, snowblowers: Students should not be allowed to use these dangerous devices. If your student will be helping with outdoor chores, have them use hand tools such as a snow shovel or a rake.
- Swimming pools: If you have a pool, be sure to have safety measures in place. Remember that in some countries it is rare for people to learn how to swim; don't assume that your student is safe. If you are unsure about your student's swimming ability, implement a rule requiring them to only swim under adult supervision.

- Hot tubs: Explain that a hot tub is not like a regular bath – no soap allowed! Make sure that they know that they should only use the hot tub for a limited time to prevent their body from overheating.
- Plugs: Depending on where they come from, your student might need adapters to plug in a laptop or phone recharger. Generally, this should be safe, but you should monitor the equipment to make sure it is not overheating.

## BATHROOM ORIENTATION

You should show your student how the toilet works and explain that only toilet paper should be put in it. If you have a female student, advise them where to dispose of feminine hygiene products. Some students will be embarrassed about the operation of the toilet. Emphasize to them that if the toilet becomes clogged, they must ask for help rather than continuing to try to flush, causing it to overflow.

In some countries, the entire bathroom is tiled and it is acceptable to allow the shower to spray anywhere. Obviously, this does not work in most Canadian bathrooms! Emphasize the importance of using the shower curtain or closing the shower doors.

Some students may have some special bathroom needs. Ask your student if this is the case for them. During the conversation, you can explain your expectations regarding the student's personal hygiene. Their regular cleanliness practices of showering or brushing of teeth might be less than you believe to be adequate.



## HOUSEHOLD CHORES

NBISP sets out the expectation that students be treated as a member of the family and you may find it is enough to simply require students to keep their room neat and tidy and clean up after themselves in the kitchen and bathroom. Check with your Homestay Coordinator if you have any questions about what is reasonable.

Here are some chores your student might be encouraged to help with:

- Shoveling snow can be a novel and fun activity for students from warm climates. If you do it with them, it becomes a shared experience and an opportunity for them to practice their English at the same time. You can take a picture for them to post on social media – it's sure to be popular in their home country. Do not allow students to use snowblowers as these machines can be quite dangerous.

- Helping with the meal preparation and clean up: This is an opportunity to lend a hand and to practice English one-to-one.
- Grocery shopping: Having your student help with the shopping is a chance for them to see what is available in Canadian supermarkets. As well, they can choose some of their favorite foods, which can be comforting.

## SAFETY AND MEDICAL PROTOCOLS



It is imperative that you keep your student safe at all times.

- Boating/water activities: Students must wear a lifejacket. In many countries, children do not learn to swim, and you should not assume that your student can.
- Dangerous activities: Do not take your student on dangerous activities, such as skydiving or bungee-jumping.
- Motorized vehicles: Students are not permitted to drive motorized vehicles, including ATVs, snowmobiles and personal watercraft.
- In the home: Explain about the smoke detectors and other alarms in your house. Show your student how to call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number.
- Provide a key: Give your student a key to your house so they can lock the door upon leaving each day.

The Homestay Host agrees to provide guidance and supervision to the student consistent with that which would be provided by a careful and wise parent. Safety is vital and for that reason these questions are helpful in keeping your student safe when they are not with you.

- Where are you?
- Where are you going?
- What will you be doing?
- Who will you be with?
- How will you get home?

Please understand that many teenagers will find this level of scrutiny uncomfortable. Some will not be used to providing this information because their natural parents knew their habits and they had established a level of trust. However, you do need to know the answers to those questions.

### **Procedures for doctor or hospital visits & medical insurance coverage**

- Students must always keep their medical insurance policy information with them.
- Students must present their insurance information at the time of a doctor's visit or when accessing other medical services. If the student accesses services that are not direct billed, they need to have a method of making payment, later claiming for reimbursement if their medical insurance plan covers the service.

An app outlining details about their medical coverage is available to the student. Please make yourself familiar with the information in case of a situation requiring medical attention.



**EMERGENCY SITUATIONS:** Student safety is our paramount concern. If there is a life-threatening emergency, the priority is to take the student directly to the hospital or call 911 to have first responders attend to the student emergency. As soon as practical you must contact your Homestay Coordinator, Homestay Administrator or Regional Manager. The Director of NBISP is the custodian of all students in the program and is the only person authorized to make health care decisions for all NBISP students. Please refer all emergency health care requests from the hospital or responsible attending health care provider to the Director of NBISP or the Regional Manager.

### **MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS**



Although student applications are reviewed for physical and mental good health, it is important to note that not all pre-existing conditions are reported. As well, there has been an increase in mental health issues of young people. Adolescence is a vulnerable time where mental disorders can first emerge (Crone & Achterberg, 2022).

Unless you have the medical credentials, you cannot diagnose a mental or physical disorder. However, the Canadian Mental Health Continuum chart (following) might help you identify signs that activate a further conversation with your Homestay Coordinator regarding your student's possible need for professional help. It's important to remember that a person can move in either direction along the spectrum, which means there is always the possibility of the student's return to full health and functioning.

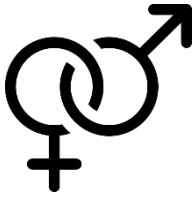
An up-to-date accessible, searchable database of NB community, government and social services is available online through [nb.211.ca](http://nb.211.ca). Calling 211 for non-emergencies, puts you in touch with live assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The New Brunswick Mental Health Hotline can be reached at [1.866.355.5550](tel:18663555550). Canada's suicide and mental health crisis line is [988](tel:988).

In an emergency, call [911](tel:911) immediately. An emergency is any situation that requires immediate assistance from the police, fire department or paramedics.

MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM MODEL			
HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
Normal fluctuations in mood Takes things in stride Good sense of humour Consistent performance Physically & socially active Confident in self & others Drinking in moderation	Nervousness, irritability Sadness, overwhelmed Displaced sarcasm Procrastination Forgetfulness Trouble sleeping Low energy Muscle tension, headaches Missing an occasional class or deadline Decreased social activity Drinking regularly or in binges to manage stress	Anxiety, anger Pervasive sadness, tearfulness, hopelessness, worthlessness Negative attitude Difficulty concentrating Trouble making decisions Decreased performance, regularly missing classes/deadlines, or over work Restless, disturbed sleep Avoidance, social withdrawal Increase used of alcohol-hard to control	Excessive anxiety Panic attacks Easily enraged, aggressive Depressed mood, numb Cannot concentrate Inability to make decisions Cannot fall asleep/stay asleep Constant fatigue, illness Absent from social events/classes Suicidal thoughts/intent Unusual sensory experiences (hearing or seeing things) Alcohol or other addiction
Nurture support systems.	Recognize limits, take breaks, identify problems early, seek support.	Tune into own signs of distress. Talk to someone, ask for help. Make self-care a priority. Don't withdraw.	Seek professional care. Follow recommendations.

## CREATING A SAFE SPACE FOR LGBTQI+ STUDENTS



Gender matters do not necessarily come with physical or mental health issues but do require supportive attitudes and actions. Suggestions include:

- Ask for pronouns.
- Ask for the name they want to be called by.
- Use gender neutral language.
- Avoid direct questions about gay/trans/bi identity; it is up to the student to decide whether to share this information, and with whom.
- Be open and vulnerable yourself.
- Listen, acknowledge, and don't judge.

## TALKING WITH YOUR STUDENT



Communicate clearly with your student by speaking slowly and using simple vocabulary. In some cultures, students may indicate that they understand when in fact they don't. It can be helpful to support your spoken instructions by writing down information for your student.

Canadians are fairly direct in their communication style, making their point firmly. In some cultures, being direct is seen as rude and some students will prefer to give vague responses. For example, a Japanese student may say "that would be difficult" instead of saying directly that they can't do something.

On the other hand, students from some cultures may seem too blunt or demanding to Canadians. Again, this is a matter of cultural expectations, and you should not consider it rude. As well, English-language learners often have not yet acquired the nuances of the language and may not know how to state their point of view less forcefully.



Canadians typically maintain eye contact when speaking. We view people who avoid eye contact as perhaps hiding something or being dishonest. In many cultures, eye contact is inappropriate since it is a sign of disrespect or is viewed as confrontational.

When asking a question, most Canadians expect that a nod, a smile or a “yes” indicates agreement. In fact, this is not always the case! In some cultures, smiling and giggling may signal embarrassment or even confusion. Since your student is learning English, there may be many instances where they are uncertain what you mean. A “yes” response may mean that the student is listening, not necessarily that they are in agreement. If you run into these challenges, try to simplify your questions and slow the pace of the conversation.

### **PRACTICING ENGLISH**

One of the reasons that students choose homestay over other accommodation options is the opportunity to improve their English with the homestay members. You don't have to act as a tutor to your student, but you should be prepared to spend some time helping them with their speaking and listening skills through conversation.

- Family gatherings: Remind family members that they need to speak slowly and use simple vocabulary, so the student understands.
- One-on-one time: The dinner table with multiple participants can be overwhelming for students, with everyone talking at once. Therefore, it is very useful for you to engage your student in one-on-one conversations where you can take the time to make sure the student understands.
- Ask open-ended questions: Encourage your student to practice their English by asking questions that require more than a Yes or No answer. “What did you do today?” “Tell me about your favorite place in your country.”
- Respectfully monitor the student's progress in school and offer assistance when possible.
- Encourage speaking: Students will feel most comfortable speaking if they know that you are interested in listening rather than correcting their mistakes. Some cultures put such an emphasis on accuracy that students become reluctant to speak for fear of making an error. Therefore, help the student practice their speaking, with only the occasional error correction.
- If you have children or others in your home, they can play a role in helping your student improve English skills. Playing a board game or cards with the student, they can engage in conversation at the same time.

## CELLPHONE AND INTERNET

Most students bring a cellphone and laptop/tablet with them to New Brunswick.



For the cellphone, your student may need to arrange to get a local number and a pre-paid SIM card. As a host family, you are not responsible for your student's cellphone costs and you should not add their phone to your account or co-sign the contract.

You can help your student to understand their plan, especially limits on calling and accessing the internet. This will help them avoid getting a large bill the first month!

You should be prepared to make your internet service available so students can use their laptop in their room. Prior to arrival, check into any limits on your internet service plan. Some plans are limited, and heavy use may result in extra charges. Explain to your student that they will be responsible for the extra charges they might incur.

Cellphone and internet use can be a major source of conflict between students and Homestay Host; it's important to clearly explain your expectations.

## FOOD AND MEALS



Your student is in Canada and part of the experience is trying new foods. You can provide dinners that you would normally cook for your family. There is no need to make a special meal for your student.

You can let the student prepare their own breakfast. Make available cereal or bread, a form of protein, and some fruit or juice. Even though microwave ovens and toasters are common in most countries, be sure to explain how your appliances work.

On occasion, your student may wish to prepare their own separate main meals. Students should do this infrequently as it adds to your grocery bill and weakens links with the homestay members.

If your student comes from a country where rice is commonly prepared daily, you should strongly consider purchasing a rice cooker from a local department store. One student had

no idea how to make rice in a pot – they would turn the stove element on high and return half an hour later. The result was a blackened mess and a ruined pot! You may wish to make some rice on a regular basis and store it in a container in the refrigerator. In this way, the student can make a snack when they are hungry.

Other snacks could include nuts, vegetables, fruit, and yogurt. Some students may not be comfortable with the concept of “help yourself” so be sure to let your student know that the snacks are for them to consume as desired.



NBISP requires Homestay Hosts to provide three meals daily, including a lunch. Students can take a sandwich or leftovers. Some students are offended by the idea of leftovers – you can avoid this impression by setting aside their lunch when preparing the evening meal. If the student prefers to buy their lunch rather than consume the one you provide, that expense is theirs.

In many cultures, lunch is the most important meal of the day; students may expect to eat a substantial meal at noon hour and a smaller one in the evening. Their usual mealtimes can be quite different from Canadian ones as well. In many European and South American countries, lunch is a leisurely affair lasting up to two hours. In the evening, families may not dine until 9 pm or even later. While you do not have to change your meal habits to satisfy your student, a little compromise can go a long way.

Students from Asian cultures may not care for salads or raw vegetables – they may prefer their veggies cooked. Other cultures may forbid the eating of certain meats; your Homestay Coordinator will let you know if your student has specific dietary needs.

Don't take it personally if your student is less than enthusiastic about your cooking. In Canada, the expectation is to “compliment the cook.” Students from other countries may find your cooking just too unusual, even if it is tasty.

Your student should contact you in advance if they are going to be late for, or miss, dinner. Write down your phone numbers and explain the easiest way to get in touch. Dinner is a great opportunity to share stories with your student and help them practice their English. Since some cultures dine much later than in Canada, you should make it clear what time the food will be ready. As well, some students may not share the same sense of the importance of arriving on time. Be prepared to be a bit flexible with dinner time, but ultimately you can go ahead and eat without your student – they can reheat leftovers later.

If the family goes to a restaurant for dinner, you should pay for the student since you have an obligation to provide meals.

You should never offer your student alcohol or cannabis products.

## TRANSPORTATION



In advance of the first day of school, you can accompany your student to the designated bus stop or along the walking route to school. Be sure to check and re-check the District's website to confirm the school bus stop, number on returning bus, and any changes that might occur during the first week. Check as well for school closure or bus delays.

For short distances, walking is an easy option, allowing the student to explore your area and get some basic exercise. You can keep them safe by letting them know about busy roads that should be avoided. As well, you should advise them if they need to steer clear of some neighborhoods, especially at night.

In most urban settings, students can get around via public transit or walking. Family transportation is usually the necessary option in a suburban or rural setting. Remember that your student is prohibited from driving, even if they have an international driver's license. The only exception is their practice with the instructor if enrolled in a Driver Education course.



If the student is using a bike, explain the rules of the road and suggest some routes that will be safe. Be sure they wear a helmet; while helmets are uncommon in many parts of the world, they have been proven to reduce injuries and are required by law in some jurisdictions. Explain how the gears and brakes work – bikes in other countries often have only one gear and simple braking mechanisms. Emphasize to your student that they should not use the front brakes alone – this may cause them to fall over the handlebars. Bike theft is a common occurrence in many areas and students should be advised to lock their bike at all times when not in use.

Your student should wear a seat belt at all times when in the family car or traveling with others. Again, many countries do not require seat belt use; explain to your student your local laws. You can also let them know that most buses do not have seat belts.

## TRAVEL



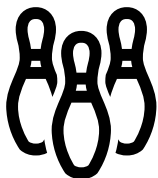
Any travel outside the province, not associated with a school or NBISP arranged activity, requires permission from NBISP and the student's natural parents. Ask your Homestay Coordinator for further details regarding the permission form and procedures.

- If the student joins you on vacation, arrangements for travel expenses should be discussed and confirmed with the student's natural parents in advance.
- The student might not want to miss classes and jeopardize their academic work. If your student decides to stay home, contact your Homestay Coordinator so that another host family placement can be arranged while you are gone.
- If you are going away overnight, your student should not be left alone in the house. Students may not feel comfortable telling you this and may indicate that they are okay with it. Ensuring your student has adult supervision overnight is for your protection as well since your student may not know what to do in an emergency.

Sometimes Homestay Hosts must go out of town; there may be a family emergency or an unexpected business trip. If this happens, contact your Homestay Coordinator as soon as possible to discuss solutions.

The Homestay Host is not responsible for housing the student's visiting family members (if any) during the year. The student should not invite visitors or friends into the home to visit or study unless given specific permission to do so by the Homestay Host.

## ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS



While the school will likely organize outings for international students, your student will appreciate being invited to take part in events with homestay members. Sometimes these

can provide the fondest memories for your student. You should pay for your student's participation as you would for a member of your family.

Take some time to speak with your student about their interests. If they are musical, take them to a concert or musical theatre show. If students love sports take them to see a hockey game – an experience they are unlikely to have had in a warmer climate.

If you are a family who hunts or quads and would like to take your student, please recognize that international students can neither carry or shoot a gun nor drive any motorized vehicle. They can be a passenger.

Celebrations of special occasions can fascinate the students. Many marvel about Thanksgiving, Hallowe'en and Christmas gatherings – the beautiful, fun decorations, elaborate meals and everyone talking and laughing. "I will never forget it in my entire life," is one student's heartfelt response to the Homestay Host's Christmas experience efforts.

## WEATHER



Students may come from countries where the weather is consistently moderate – they may not be prepared for the four seasons that are typical in New Brunswick. As you know, the seasons can change quickly, requiring different clothing. You should check with your student in advance about whether they have the clothing they need – take them shopping a few weeks before a change in seasons so they are ready.

Because we live in a region where temperatures go below freezing, be sure to emphasize to your student the importance of wearing winter boots, coat, gloves, and hat. Explain about the danger of frostbite and the fact that it can occur in just a few minutes of exposure.

Some students may feel that winter clothing is clunky and unfashionable. Help them to select gear that keeps them warm and looks good.

## CHILDREN IN YOUR HOME



If you have children, hopefully they will enjoy spending time with your student. It is important to emphasize to your children that your student will sometimes need privacy to study or to simply have a break. Tell your children that they should not enter the student's room before knocking and getting permission to come in. You can help your student by encouraging them to set limits on the amount of time the children spend with them.

Children should be told to stay out of the student's room and respect their privacy. Children should not "borrow" items from the student's room without permission. Similarly, your student should respect the privacy and belongings of your children.

Your children may become jealous of your student. It is important that the student does not receive special treatment, that they be treated equally with your children. The student should be expected to follow the same rules.

You should not ask your student to babysit your children. They are not trained to do so and may not know how to handle an emergency.

If you have children the same age as your student, ask them to invite the student to join activities and meet their friends. Keep your expectations reasonable – you cannot force people to establish relationships. A teenage son might enjoy playing video games with an international student without having much else in common. They can have a good relationship without forming a lifelong bond.

## PETS



If you have pets, consider how your dog or cat or other animal will respond to having a new family member. Some pets can be quite territorial and protective of their owners.

It is important to explain any rules you may have about your pet. Some cats stay indoors, while others are allowed to roam outside. Some families let their dog loose in the backyard, but some require that the dog is hooked to a lead line.

If your student takes your dog for a walk, be sure they understand your jurisdiction's leash laws and stoop-and-scoop requirements. Let them know if it is okay for the dog to socialize with other animals and to be greeted by small children.

Some religions prohibit direct contact with dogs. Therefore, do not be surprised if your student does not want to pet your dog or be touched by it.

Homestay hosts should be vigilant and patient when introducing the family pet(s) to the international student. Many countries are less likely than Canadian homes to have pets.

## ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS



If your student has a friend of romantic interest, they should ask your permission before inviting them over to your house. They can spend time together in the family room or in the student's room with the door open. The friend should not be allowed to stay overnight.

Romantic relationships are not encouraged in the program; however, you are encouraged to engage in a candid conversation with your student to ensure they understand the cultural differences in regard to dating, consent, as well as safe sex practices.

## RELIGION

Generally, it is acceptable to invite students to religious services. However, this should be an opportunity for the student to learn about your religion – not an attempt to convert them. Don't feel offended if your student declines to attend.

Some students come from religions where they are expected to pray several times a day. Your Homestay Coordinator can assist you in preparing to meet any needs of your student.

It is a nice gesture to prepare a list of religious organizations in your neighborhood. If your student wishes to take part, this is a great opportunity for them to meet people and get involved in the community. Be sure to meet any people who will be taking your student to activities as you are responsible for the student's safety.



## APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE ADULT BEHAVIOURS



Homestay Hosts must be particularly careful to avoid any semblance of inappropriate behavior. There must be no sexual contact with your student. Adults should remember to dress appropriately while in the company of students and should not use sexually suggestive language or jokes in front of students.

If you get into a dispute with your student, it is essential not to make threats or withhold essentials.

The required NBISP Student Protection Training (AEI Policy 102) online module provides further explanation. Your Homestay Coordinator will be required to report any observed or reported abuse, neglect, or other inappropriate behaviour.

Discipline that aligns with safe and supportive parenting, such as removing privileges for breaking curfew, is not considered abuse. Physical discipline is not supported under any circumstances.

Various cultures have different standards for greeting and hugging. In many European countries, it is common to give a kiss on the cheek as a greeting. In Arab countries, men may shake hands and hug other men, but will not shake hands with a woman. In Japan, it is most common to bow or shake hands.

It may be useful for you to research the customs in your student's country. Most importantly, do not be offended if your student is uncomfortable with hugging – it may simply mean that they do not see it as appropriate behaviour in their culture. In deciding whether to offer a hug or any other form of physical comfort or support, you should take your lead from the student. It is good practice to ask, without applying pressure or expectations.

## DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS



At times, you may be required to have difficult conversations with your student. Here are some guiding principles to make the experience and outcome as positive as possible.

- Time & place – talk in a private, non-threatening space.
- Address issues directly.
- Name the situation/issue.
- Make no judgements.
- Avoid the blame game.
- Inquire and listen to learn.
- Acknowledge feelings – make the student feel heard and understood.
- Say what you mean - be kind and direct.
- Be aware of your own body language/facial expressions – tone & volume.
- Repeat back your understanding of the issues (avoids misunderstanding).
- Problem solve – together.

## WORKING WITH YOUR HOMESTAY COORDINATOR

Your Homestay Coordinator is there to help you. If an issue arises with your student, try the steps above to resolve it directly with the student. However, if you are unable to come up with a solution you should let the Homestay Coordinator assist you.

It is important to contact the Homestay Coordinator:

- About serious issues with your student, such as inappropriate behaviour or criminal activity.
- If your student is consistently unhappy or withdrawn. This may be a simple case of culture shock or it could point to more serious mental health concerns.
- If you need clarification about the program's homestay policies and forms.

The Homestay Host should recognize that international students often feel powerless when problems arise. This is very common. These feelings of powerlessness can be due to poor English skills, different cultural views, and cultural deference to adults, desire to please, fear of creating problems or any unknown reason as well. As a result, students might request the help of their Homestay Coordinator or other AEI staff instead of speaking to the Homestay Host directly.

Students typically feel that an issue is larger than the Homestay Host perceives it to be. This is natural for a student living with someone who is not their biological family because they have no past reference as to what to expect. With that in mind, it can often take more discussions and more time to understand each other and to overcome a particular issue.

Your Homestay Coordinator will work with you to resolve these concerns. In some cases, the student or the Homestay Host may request a move.

## CHANGING HOMESTAYS



As in any other relationship, sometimes homestays just don't work out. There could be unrealistic expectations on the part of the student, conflict, or just incompatibility. Whatever the reason, sometimes a student will request a new homestay. In some cases, the student will not even tell you that they want to make a change.

While this can seem very hurtful at the time, it is important not to be personally offended. Your Homestay Coordinator will make every effort to find you another match in the future.

Remember that the student and their parents overseas have invested a lot of time and money in this educational and cultural experience. They have the right to expect that it will be a positive and enriching time and this change may help them meet that goal.

Homestays need to work for both parties. If a situation concerns you or members of your family, you should discuss it with your student as soon as possible. Do not allow your grievances to build up. Open and honest communication with your student can often lead to a resolution. If you are unable to resolve the issue, contact the Homestay Coordinator who will mediate between you and the student. Ultimately, both need to feel comfortable in a homestay – your Homestay Coordinator will help you determine whether the student needs to change homestays.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Please respect your student's privacy in the same way you would protect that of your own child. If you have a complaint about the student's behaviour, please address the student directly or ask your Homestay Coordinator to intervene on your behalf. Often a problem is exacerbated by sharing it publicly rather than dealing with it privately and constructively. You can expect the same standard of confidentiality from Homestay Coordinators and AEI Staff.

## SAYING GOODBYE



All homestays ultimately come to an end. Sometimes, the end comes with the conclusion of the semester or a short-term stay. The program, custodianship and health insurance expire on June 30<sup>th</sup> so all students must return to the care of their parents by that date. Natural Parents may make additional travel or summer school arrangements for their child. Homestays are under no obligation to continue hosting the student after the program ends. If students plan to stay past June 30, they must sign a Program Release form. Contact your Homestay Coordinator for the form and procedure.

There may be cases where you have to say an early goodbye. Occasionally, student behaviour, natural family or personal needs activate an Early Program Release. Your Homestay Coordinator will work with AEI staff to handle the situation.

You should not be offended if your student is ready to move on to a new experience should they return for another semester or year.

Study permits, if your student has one, have an expiry date. If your student wants to extend or obtain a study permit, they need to consult with their sending agent. If they need help in contacting the agent, the Regional Manager can assist.

It is a great idea to provide your student with something to remember their homestay members. This could be a photo album, a T-shirt from their favourite restaurant or a box of their favorite snacks. One of the homestay students decided to create, with the help of her Homestay Host, a keepsake video that included some of her most-loved experiences, places visited and a clip on each member of the family – including the Golden Retriever.

## CONCLUSION AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Hosting students can be great – you may make lifelong friends and perhaps even have the opportunity to visit your student in their country. With other students, you may not feel the same connection. Regardless, you should benefit from the experience. You will learn about another culture, see things from a different perspective and hopefully learn something about yourself. You will be a valued ambassador for the NBISP homestay program.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ARE COPIED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES

## SOME EXAMPLES ON HOW TO CREATE A HEALTHY ADULT-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

Show interest in their culture, learn from them	Constant and open communication
Foster a relationship built on trust	Ensure a caring and safe environment
Talk about their boundaries, how they want to be comforted or congratulated; ask consent (hugs)	Provide expectations, guidelines, guidance and support
Give student space when they need it	Support student's academics and compliment their hard work
Incorporate their culture (holidays, meals)	Talk about differences they are experiencing
Help students develop friendships and experiences	Support & attend extracurricular activities

## WHEN ISSUES HAPPEN

Support the student to help them see where they could make a better choice, redirect behaviour in an age-appropriate way.	Help the student understand the consequences of their action/choice; students may not fully understand laws in NB or your traditions, culture, and lived experiences
Focus on the behaviour and the "why"	Maintain parental role
Involve the student in preventing a re-occurrence in the future	Help the student "make it right"; ask how you can provide support
Address and stop the behaviour and follow through on preventative expectations; communicate regularly with the Homestay Coordinator.	Consequences should relate to the issue (misuse of technology = temporarily lose access to it)
Health concerns should always involve your Homestay Coordinator (physical or mental issues)	Ask yourself "how would their parents feel about this interaction?"

## HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL HOMESTAY



### **OFFER A WARM HOME ATMOSPHERE**

Treat your student as part of your family

Have meals together

Invite your student to join you in activities (like, watching movies, playing games, and going for walks)

**Have a good sense of humor** and have fun!

### **EMBRACE THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

Show genuine interest in your student's culture; learn about where they are from, discuss the similarities and differences that exist

Learn some basic phrases in your student's native language

Cook together, something from your student's home country

### **SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS**

Establish expectations of your home as soon as possible: be clear and specific (see document: Homestay Discussion Guide)

expectations in person and provide a written copy for everyone involved      Discuss  
expectations that are fair and age-appropriate      Set

### **BE PATIENT AND FLEXIBLE**

Keep in mind that your student is out of their comfort zone, be patient.

Remember that each student is different; try not to compare to "past" students

Give the benefit of the doubt and assume positive intent

Discuss needs of family and student together to come to a solution

Chat through the Host Family Discussion Guide so expectations are clear.

### **STAY IN REGULAR COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR SUPPORT TEAM**

Stay in touch with your NBISP Homestay Coordinator

Call with issues, success stories or updates. Attend NBISP meetings,

Attend parent-teacher nights at your student's school

Remember that the NBISP Team is here to help in any way!

### **HAVE OPEN COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR STUDENT**

Be approachable

Ensure your student feels comfortable telling you what they like/don't like or don't understand about your home

Ask them about their day and tell them about yours

## HOMESTAY DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Homestay Discussion Guide

Discussion with Student(s) and Homestay host(s)

*(To be completed within the first few days of student(s) arrival)*



**The purpose of this handout is to provide both the homestay family and student(s) an opportunity to discuss expectations of the home with one another as well as answer any questions either may have.**

Homestay family is responsible to provide their student with their Wi-Fi password upon arrival so the student can easily communicate with their natural family.

Homestay family should give the student a tour of their home so they can start to familiarize themselves with their new surroundings.

### Common Topics for Discussion

- a. Security and Safety: In case of an emergency, call 911. Discuss if the home has an alarm system and if so, what happens in case of an emergency. Provide phone numbers for everyone in the family to the student.
- b. House key or keypad code to enter or exit the home. What happens if the student forgets their key and is locked out?
- c. Student Room: Homestay is responsible to show the student where everything is in their room and how to use it. (Outlets, lights, window, thermostat) Let the student know where they can put their personal items, laundry, if they can hang things on the walls and how to go about doing this.
- d. Main bathroom student will use: Homestay is responsible to show the student how to use the shower/tub, fan, where they can store their personal items. Include when the best times will be to take showers on weekdays/weekends, how long showers can be.
- e. Laundry room: take time to show the student how to use the washer/dryer, how to put the laundry soap and laundry softener in the machine, best times to do their laundry. This may need to be shown a few times until the student is comfortable doing this.
- f. Kitchen: best practice is to show the student around the kitchen, then invite them to also explore around the kitchen so they get familiar with where things are. Take this opportunity to talk about likes/dislikes of food. Invite the student to go grocery shopping. Let the student know they can ask to have certain foods.

- g. Schedules and plans: Discuss mealtimes and schedules. What's the process if the student will be late for meals? Let the student know they can help themselves to food. Can the student cook themselves? Where can the student eat snacks in the home and the importance of cleaning up after themselves. Help with clean up after meals together.
- h. Who makes breakfast and school lunches?
- i. Schedules: Discuss family schedules, importance of knowing who's doing what, where & when. Can the student have friends over and what are the rules? Can the student go to friends' homes and what are the rules? Let the student know it's important to try and speak English as much as possible even when having friends at home that speak their own language.
- j. Device use: Are there any family rules in place for using devices?
- k. Privacy: Let the student know it's okay to have time to themselves when needed and the importance of spending time with the family.
- l. Storage: Show the student where they can store personal belongings that need to go somewhere other than their bedroom. (Luggage, sporting equipment, seasonal clothing)
- m. Discuss how the student will travel to school: Bus or walking. Show the student where the bus stop is and provide times. If the student walks, do a trial run and walk the route with them or drive it so they can become familiar with it.
- n. Bedtime: Discuss times student should go to bed and get up for school. Let the student know when it's quiet time in the home.
- o. Cell Phone: Help the student get a Canadian cell phone plan. It's important the student and family can always reach one another and not just when the student is able to connect to Wi-Fi somewhere.

**Discussion Notes - post at home in central location for reference (fridge, bulletin board)**

Thank you for being a Homestay Host!





## **GOLDEN RULES FOR HOSTING A STUDENT**

- **Appreciate differences:** You will learn that there are many ways of approaching relationships and situations, depending on cultural background. You may not want to adopt your student's approach, but it is important to understand it.
- **Respect:** You have the right to be treated respectfully by your student and should be respectful in return.
- **Set expectations early:** Communicate clearly (both verbally and in writing) your expectations around being on time, keeping the bathroom clean, doing laundry, etc.
- **Be patient:** Your student may take some time to adapt to living in New Brunswick, so be patient if they find the first week or two overwhelming.
- **Have fun:** Plan some activities to share with your student and have a blast! Your student will remember these, and you, for years to come.