



ASSIST
SCHOLARS

2025 - 2026

The ASSIST Scholars
Handbook

For Students in Boarding Schools
and Day Schools

Please keep this booklet with you for
reference during your American year.

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The ASSIST Mission

ASSIST transforms lives by creating opportunities for exceptional international scholars to learn from and contribute to the most distinguished American independent secondary schools.

Welcome to ASSIST

Congratulations on being selected as an ASSIST Scholar for the 2025/26 academic year!

Your selection is a testament to your remarkable accomplishments and your success in the competitive scholarship process held in your home country. Many students aspire to be ASSIST Scholars, but only a select few are chosen for this extraordinary opportunity.

While this scholarship is a significant honor, it also carries important responsibilities. As an ASSIST Scholar, you represent not only yourself, but also your family, your country, and the ASSIST organization within your school community. We are confident that you will make meaningful contributions to your school and serve as a proud ambassador throughout this experience.

You and ASSIST

A Legacy of Excellence

Over 6,000 students from 54 countries have experienced a transformative year in America through ASSIST. As an ASSIST Scholar, you join a distinguished group of global student ambassadors who have made meaningful contributions to their schools and communities. We are confident that you are well-prepared to continue this tradition of excellence.

A Lifelong Connection

Your journey with ASSIST does not end with the conclusion of your exchange year—it is the beginning of a lifelong relationship. We will support you and stay connected throughout your year in the U.S., and through our alumni initiatives, we aim to maintain that connection as you return home, continue your education, and embark on your career.

The ASSIST experience fosters enduring relationships among scholars and with the organization. Alumni often assist one another with university guidance, internships, career advice, and leadership opportunities.

As an ASSIST Scholar, you are part of a global network of future leaders united by a unique experience of cultural exchange and academic excellence. This connection provides a strong foundation for your personal growth and professional future.

Support During Your ASSIST Year

Challenges are a natural part of the exchange experience, and we encourage you to reach out for support whenever needed. ASSIST, along with your teachers, host families, school advisors, and parents, is here to help with:

- Visa issues.
- Travel plans.
- Medical conditions or emergencies.
- Academic or social difficulties at school.

By involving us in important decisions, we can provide the guidance necessary to ensure your year is successful and rewarding.

Developing Leadership Skills

As an ASSIST Scholar, you serve as an ambassador of your country and culture. Leadership is a cornerstone of the program, and we select students who demonstrate the ability to foster understanding across cultures during their exchange year and beyond.

At your American school, we encourage you to:

- Share your perspective in classes and discussions.
- Deliver presentations to peers and parents.
- Write for school publications or post on social media.
- Immerse yourself in school life by participating in activities, events, and organizations.

The more you engage, the richer your experience will be. Upon returning home, we urge you to share your learnings through talks, articles, or social media, inspiring others to pursue an exchange year and contributing to ASSIST's mission of fostering a more understanding and peaceful world.

Stay connected with your Country Coordinator to explore ways to recruit future scholars and build the alumni network.

Expectations of ASSIST Scholars

"To whom much is given, much is expected."

As an ASSIST Scholar, you have been granted an extraordinary opportunity to attend one of America's finest independent secondary schools. These scholarships are rare, and schools continue offering them only when Scholars demonstrate exemplary behavior, uphold high standards, and actively contribute to the school community.

Merely following the rules or meeting minimum expectations is not enough. Scholars are expected to put forth maximum effort, strive for excellence, and serve as role models for their peers.

Behavior and Conduct

ASSIST Scholars are held to the highest moral and ethical standards. Any behavior that discredits the program or yourself may result in dismissal. Examples of unacceptable behavior include:

- Bullying or harming others.
 - Self-harm.
 - Dishonesty or unethical conduct.
 - Inappropriate use of social media.
 - Lack of appreciation for the opportunities provided by your school or host family.
-

Meeting Program Expectations

Every ASSIST Scholar is chosen for their academic promise, personal character, and potential to contribute meaningfully. Scholars who neglect their responsibilities, focus solely on self-interest, or fail to engage as productive school citizens may be asked to withdraw from the program.

By embracing this opportunity with enthusiasm, integrity, and commitment, you uphold the legacy of ASSIST and set a positive example for future Scholars. We are proud to support you on this transformative journey and look forward to seeing the impact you will make.

Preparation for Your ASSIST Year

Before embarking on your ASSIST journey, it is essential that you and your family thoroughly review all materials provided by ASSIST and your host school. Success begins with a clear understanding of the expectations and guidelines governing your year in the United States.

A spirit of cooperation is fundamental to making the most of this opportunity. By agreeing to the program's regulations, you demonstrate your readiness to engage fully and responsibly in this experience. These guidelines are designed with your well-being and success in mind, and adhering to them ensures a positive and enriching year for all involved.

Important Program Rules

To avoid misunderstandings, please be aware of the following non-negotiable rules, which have been established to maintain the integrity of the program:

- **Extending Your Stay: Scholars may request to extend their study in the U.S. for an additional year; however, the final decision rests with both the school and ASSIST. Please note that an extended stay will require the student's family to pay tuition directly to the school, along with an additional fee to ASSIST.**
- **Graduation:** Scholars may not pursue graduation from their American school.
- **School Transfers:** Scholars may not request to change schools during the program.
- **Driving:** Scholars are not permitted to take driver's education courses or operate a vehicle.

If you have any questions or concerns about these or any other program rules, please seek clarification before departing for the United States. Your ASSIST representative in your home country, as well as our team in the U.S., are here to support you and ensure you are fully prepared for this transformative experience.

We are excited for you to begin this incredible journey and look forward to witnessing the positive impact you will make. Welcome to the ASSIST community!

You and ASSIST

A Legacy of Excellence

Since its inception, ASSIST has enabled 5,991 students from 54 countries to spend a transformative year in the United States. As part of this esteemed group of global student ambassadors, you are now poised to continue this tradition of excellence. We are confident that, like those who came before you, you will bring immense value to your school and community.

A Lifelong Connection

Your relationship with ASSIST extends far beyond your exchange year. This is the beginning of a lifelong journey with us. During your year in the U.S., we will support and guide you closely, and our ongoing initiatives ensure we stay connected as you return home, pursue further studies, and embark on your career.

The bonds formed through ASSIST are enduring. Our alumni network serves as a resource for university guidance, internships, career opportunities, and leadership development. By maintaining these connections, ASSIST alumni continue to learn from one another and foster a global community dedicated to mutual understanding and growth.

As an ASSIST Scholar, you join a unique network of future leaders across many nations. This shared experience of cultural exchange, academic rigor, and personal growth provides a powerful foundation for your future endeavors.

Support During Your Year

Challenges may arise during your year abroad, and when they do, we encourage you to seek assistance from your teachers, host family, school advisors, and the ASSIST team. Whether you face issues with your visa, travel plans, medical emergencies, or academic and social concerns, we are here to support you. Your success is our priority, and we ask you to involve us in any significant decisions to ensure your year is as enriching as possible.

Developing Leadership Skills

As an ASSIST Scholar, you are an ambassador of your culture and country. Your role is pivotal in fostering cross-cultural understanding during your exchange year and beyond.

We encourage you to actively engage in your school community by:

- Sharing your perspective in classes.
- Delivering speeches to the student body or parent groups.
- Writing articles for the school newspaper or website.
- Posting on social media about your experiences.
- Participating fully in school activities and events.

Immersing yourself in these opportunities will not only enrich your experience but also strengthen your connection to your school and peers. Upon returning home, we encourage you to share your experiences through school presentations, publications, or social media. By doing so, you inspire

others to consider an exchange year and contribute to ASSIST's mission of fostering global understanding.

Stay connected with your Country Coordinator to explore how you can support ASSIST in recruiting future scholars and expanding the alumni network.

Expectations of ASSIST Scholars

The Opportunity and Responsibility

"With great opportunity comes great responsibility." As an ASSIST Scholar, you have been awarded a rare and prestigious scholarship at one of America's leading independent schools. These scholarships are granted sparingly, and schools continue their partnership with ASSIST only when our Scholars uphold the highest standards and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

It is not enough to simply follow school rules or meet basic expectations. You are encouraged to strive for excellence, exert maximum effort, and serve as a role model for your peers.

Behavior and Conduct

ASSIST Scholars are expected to uphold the highest moral and ethical standards. Any behavior that discredits you, your host school, or the ASSIST program is unacceptable and may result in dismissal from the program. Examples of unacceptable behavior include:

- Bullying or harming others.
 - Self-harm.
 - Dishonesty or unethical actions.
 - Inappropriate use of social media.
 - Failing to appreciate the opportunities provided by your school or host family.
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Commitment to Excellence

As an ASSIST Scholar, you were chosen for your academic abilities, personal character, and leadership potential. We expect you to work diligently, contribute meaningfully to your school, and actively participate in its programs. Scholars who neglect these responsibilities or focus solely on personal interests, risk being withdrawn from the program.

By meeting these expectations, you uphold the legacy of ASSIST and pave the way for future Scholars. We are honored to support you in this remarkable journey and look forward to witnessing your success as an ambassador and leader.

Preparation for Your ASSIST Year

The remainder of this handbook is designed to guide you through the preparation for your ASSIST experience. It outlines key considerations, important rules, and practical advice to help you make the most of this extraordinary opportunity.

In addition to this handbook, you will receive further information from both your school and ASSIST. Please review all materials thoroughly and reflect on how to prepare yourself for a successful and fulfilling year. While no guide can anticipate every situation you may encounter, the resources provided will serve as a strong foundation for your journey.

Important Medical Information

Health and Accident Insurance

To meet the requirements of ASSIST and the U.S. Department of State, you must have comprehensive health and accident insurance coverage before you arrive in the United States. You may satisfy this requirement by either:

1. Purchasing insurance through ASSIST, or
2. Purchasing the policy offered by your American school.

No other policies will be accepted.

Physical Examination and Vaccinations

A yearly physical examination and specific vaccinations are mandatory, as required by your American school and U.S. regulations. Additionally, we recommend:

- A thorough dental check-up.
- An eye examination, particularly if you wear glasses or contact lenses.

Your school's **Student Medical Information Form** must be completed by your family physician and your parents. All medical conditions must be disclosed, as failure to do so could result in dismissal from the program.

Copies of this form must be uploaded to both your Parent Portal in SchoolAdmin/Finalsite and your American school, following the instructions outlined in the memo, *Important Information About Your Year Abroad*.

Important:

- Ensure that all required vaccinations and booster shots are completed before travel. Failure to comply with vaccination requirements may prevent you from attending school or participating in school programs.
 - Vaccinations are not covered by ASSIST's GeoBlue Health Insurance and will be your responsibility if needed in the U.S.
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Acute Medical Conditions

During your stay, you may encounter medical emergencies or illnesses requiring attention. While most situations are covered by short-term medical insurance, severe conditions such as life-threatening illnesses, eating disorders, or depression may not be fully covered and could necessitate returning home for further care.

Health Information Privacy (HIPAA)

The **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)** safeguards the privacy of personal health information. If you receive medical treatment in the U.S., you may need to sign a release form designating who can access your medical information.

To ensure ASSIST can support you, we recommend listing ASSIST on this form along with your parents, guardian, host family, and school personnel. This enables us to monitor your health and assist as needed. Choosing absolute privacy can limit our ability to provide support and is often regretted by families.

Travel Preparation

Obtaining Your F-1 Visa

Your school will send you the U.S. Government Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student, which is required to apply for your F-1 Visa. Along with the I-20, you will receive instructions on:

1. Completing the I-20 form.
2. Paying the SEVIS fee online (Form I-901).
3. Preparing the necessary documents for your visa application.

Steps to Apply:

1. After receiving your I-20 form and paying the SEVIS fee, contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for visa application instructions.
2. Begin the process immediately upon receiving your documents to avoid delays.

Documents Required:

- Passport.
- SEVIS I-901 payment receipt.
- Official, sealed transcript with grades, class rank, and test scores (e.g., TOEFL, if applicable).
- Form I-20 (copy accepted).
- DS-160 Form (online application).
- Acceptance letters from ASSIST and your school.
- Financial evidence (e.g., bank statement, property ownership proof, or financial support letter from ASSIST).

If you have questions about the visa process, contact your school first, then ASSIST.

At the U.S. Port of Entry:

When arriving in the U.S., present the following to the immigration officer:

- Passport with F-1 Visa.
- Form I-20.
- Form I-94 (*Arrival/Departure Record*), completed before landing.
- I-901 fee payment receipt.

Occasionally, immigration officers may retain your I-20 form. If this occurs, notify your school's International Student Advisor or ASSIST Representative upon arrival, and they will help you obtain a replacement.

Securing Your J-1 Visa for Select Day Schools

The United States Department of State has designated ASSIST qualifying us as an official Exchange Visitor's Program, which entitles students in our program to come to the United States on a visa for one year. The Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status Form (DS-2019) allows the student to enter this country.

Present the original DS-2019 when you apply for your visa at the nearest American Embassy or Consulate. They will accept a digital copy. We encourage you to begin the process of obtaining your visa as soon as you receive the paperwork from ASSIST.

The original, Embassy DS-2019 should be presented again to the Immigration Service at the point of entry to the United States.

Although this form should be returned to you at this time, the Immigration Service may keep your DS-2019. Please do not panic.

When you arrive at your school, please report to the ASSIST office that your DS-2019 was not returned to you when you entered the country. We will send a new form to you at your school.

At the U.S. Port of Entry:

When arriving in the U.S., present the following to the immigration officer:

- Passport with J-1 Visa.
- Form DS-2019.
- Form I-94 (*Arrival/Departure Record*), completed before landing.
- I-901 fee payment receipt.

Occasionally, immigration officers may retain your I-20 form. If this occurs, notify your school's International Student Advisor or ASSIST Representative upon arrival, and they will help you obtain a replacement.

Special Travel Experiences

Scholars with a J-1 Visa

Special permission to travel to another country cannot be granted without (a) a letter/email from your family permitting you to go to that country, and (b) a letter/email of invitation from the family or organization that will be hosting you. (c) You must also mail your original DS-2019 to the ASSIST office in Suffield, Connecticut before you take any trip outside of the United States so that we may sign it.

Without our signature, you may not be allowed to reenter the US. As well, you should plan to consult an official in the consulate of the country to which you plan to travel – requirements vary, both by country of destination and by country of citizenship.

What to Bring: A Comprehensive Packing Guide for Your ASSIST Year

Preparing for your year abroad is an exciting part of the journey! To help you get started, we've outlined a detailed packing guide to ensure you're ready for both academic life and daily living in the U.S. It's important to pack strategically, considering the climate, school dress codes, and your personal needs.

Documents and Essentials

- **Passport:** Ensure it's valid for at least six months beyond your stay in the U.S.
 - **Visa (F-1/J-1):** Ensure you have your visa and all necessary documentation.
 - **Form I-20:** Keep this form in your carry-on; you will need it at immigration.
 - **SEVIS Fee Receipt (Form I-901):** Proof of payment is required for entry.
 - **Acceptance Letters:** Both from ASSIST and your school.
 - **Medical Records:** Include completed vaccination records, the Student Medical Information Form, and any other required health documentation.
 - **Emergency Contact List:** A printed list of contacts, including ASSIST, your school, host family, and parents.
 - **Travel Insurance Information:** Include policy details for health and accident coverage.
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Clothing

Pack clothing suitable for various seasons, as weather conditions in the U.S. can range from hot summers to cold winters depending on your location.

Casual Wear:

- Jeans, shorts, and casual pants.
- T-shirts and tank tops.
- Sweaters, sweatshirts, and hoodies.
- Comfortable shoes for walking and daily activities.

Formal/School Wear:

- School Uniform (if required): Confirm with your school beforehand.
- Dress shirts, blouses, and skirts/pants for formal occasions.
- A blazer or suit for events like school presentations or ceremonies.
- Dress shoes or flats.

Winter Wear (if applicable):

- A heavy winter coat.
- Hats, gloves, and scarves.
- Thermal layers or long underwear.
- Waterproof boots for snow or rain.

Sports/Activity Clothing:

- Gym shoes and athletic wear for sports and physical education.
- Swimwear if your school has a pool or you plan to swim.
- Any required equipment or uniforms if you are joining a specific sport (check with your school).

Electronics

- **Laptop/Tablet:** For academic work and staying connected with family.
 - **Phone:** Ensure it is unlocked for use with a U.S. SIM card.
 - **Chargers:** For all devices (consider bringing a multi-device charger).
 - **Travel Adapter:** For U.S. electrical outlets (voltage: 120V).
 - **Power Bank:** For charging devices on the go.
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Academic Supplies

- Notebooks and pens (basic supplies; additional items can be purchased in the U.S.).
 - A calculator (check if a specific model is required for math/science courses).
 - Textbooks or reading materials provided by your school or recommended in advance.
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Personal Care Items

- **Toiletries:** Travel-sized shampoo, conditioner, body wash, toothpaste, and toothbrush for initial use. Full-sized products can be purchased locally.
- **Medications:** Any prescription medications with a copy of the prescription. Ensure they are clearly labeled.
- **Glasses/Contact Lenses:** Pack spares and your prescription.
- **Feminine Hygiene Products:** If applicable, bring a supply of your preferred products.

- **Small First Aid Kit:** Band-aids, pain relievers, and basic medical supplies.
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Specialty Items

- **Traditional Attire:** Bring clothing or items representing your culture for presentations or school events.
 - **Gifts for Host Family:** Small, thoughtful gifts that represent your country (e.g., souvenirs, local crafts, or packaged snacks).
 - **Hobby Supplies:** Small items for hobbies (e.g., sketchbooks, musical instruments, or books).
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Bedding and Linens

Check with your school or host family if bedding is provided. If not, pack:

- Twin-size sheets and pillowcases (common size in U.S. dorms).
 - A lightweight blanket or comforter.
 - A bath towel and washcloth.
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Miscellaneous

- **Reusable Water Bottle:** Essential for daily hydration.
 - **Backpack:** For school use and daily activities.
 - **Umbrella:** Compact and lightweight.
 - **Laundry Bag:** For keeping dirty clothes organized.
 - **Locks:** For securing valuables in dorms or during travel.
-

Things NOT to Bring

- **Prohibited Items:** Check U.S. customs regulations for restricted items.
 - **Excessive Valuables:** Avoid bringing expensive jewelry or unnecessary electronics.
 - **Too Many Clothes:** You can purchase additional items in the U.S. as needed.
 - **Bulky Items:** Items like large appliances or furniture can be purchased locally if required.
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Tip: Keep your packing light and versatile. Focus on essentials, as you can buy many items after arrival. Label all luggage with your name, contact information, and destination address for easy identification.

By packing thoughtfully and being prepared, you'll set yourself up for a smooth and enjoyable ASSIST year!

Mobile Phones, International Calling, and Internet Use

Most students traveling to the United States will rely on mobile phones for communication and internet access. To ensure seamless connectivity during your ASSIST year, here are our detailed recommendations:

Mobile Phones

1. Using Your Current Mobile Phone:

- **Check with Your Provider:** Contact your mobile service provider to determine if your current plan supports international usage or roaming in the U.S. Some providers offer global plans or add-ons.
- **Unlock Your Phone:** If your phone is locked to your home carrier, ensure it is unlocked so you can use a U.S.-based SIM card.

2. Purchasing a U.S.-Based SIM Card:

- A local U.S. SIM card can be an economical option. Companies like T-Mobile, AT&T, and Verizon offer prepaid SIM cards with voice, text, and data plans.
- These cards can often be purchased online or in stores upon arrival. Compare plans to find one that fits your needs.

3. Prepaid/Pay-As-You-Go Phones:

- For those who prefer not to use their own devices, prepaid phones are widely available. These allow you to top up as needed without long-term contracts.

4. School Policies on Mobile Phone Use:

- Schools typically outline mobile phone usage rules in their student handbooks. Be sure to read and follow these guidelines to avoid any issues.
 - Usage may be restricted during classes, study hours, or certain school activities.
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International Calling

To stay connected with family and friends back home, consider the following free or low-cost options:

- **Video and Voice Apps:** Use apps like WhatsApp, FaceTime, Zoom, or Skype for international calls when connected to Wi-Fi. These apps allow free communication and are widely used.
 - **Wi-Fi Calling:** Some mobile providers enable free Wi-Fi calling, which can be a cost-effective way to make international calls.
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Balancing Phone Use

While staying in touch is important, overuse of phones and video calls can hinder your ability to fully immerse yourself in your new environment. Students who spend excessive time on their phones often struggle to adapt.

- **Prioritize Your Experience:** Focus on building relationships with your host family, participating in school activities, and engaging with peers.
- **Set Boundaries:** Schedule regular but limited times to connect with family and friends back home to ensure a healthy balance between staying in touch and living in the moment.

Internet Use

1. **Wi-Fi Access:**

- Most schools and host families provide reliable Wi-Fi. Check with your host family or school about access policies.
- Use Wi-Fi for data-intensive activities like video calls and downloading materials.

2. **Data Plans:**

- If you require mobile data outside of Wi-Fi zones, choose a U.S. SIM card with a data plan that suits your needs. Prepaid plans typically offer flexible data options.

3. **School Internet Policies:**

- Schools may have guidelines regarding internet usage, including restrictions on certain websites or usage during specific hours. Review these rules and adhere to them.

By following these recommendations, you can stay connected without disrupting your experience or exceeding your budget. Remember, your focus should be on embracing this opportunity to immerse yourself in American culture and build meaningful relationships.

American Independent Secondary Schools

Attending an American independent secondary school will be a transformative and unique experience. These schools often bring together a diverse student body with varied backgrounds, but there are commonalities worth noting:

- **Diverse Economic Backgrounds:** Most students come from families with higher education backgrounds and financial stability. While some may come from affluent families, others receive financial aid to attend. It is essential to approach your peers as individuals rather than judging them based on their socioeconomic status.
- **Cultural Exchange:** Keep an open mind. Listen to different viewpoints, and share your own cultural and educational experiences constructively. While you may not agree with everything you encounter in American culture, criticism should always be thoughtful and respectful.

Adapting to New Rules and Expectations

For many ASSIST Scholars, this may be the first experience attending a boarding school. Adapting to the structured environment of an American independent school may require adjustments:

- **School Rules:** Each school has unique policies that may include curfews, dress codes, limited free weekends, or mandatory "work" hours for lateness or missed responsibilities.
- **Handbook Familiarity:** Review your school's handbook before your arrival. Understanding the rules will help you set a positive example and ease your transition.
- **Mutual Responsibility:** By accepting your ASSIST scholarship, you commit to following the school's regulations and contributing to the community.

To quote a participating school's philosophy:

"The school's purpose is not to demand blind conformity, but to encourage creativity, imagination, and leadership while rewarding the courage to be different—without causing harm to oneself or others."

School Procedures

1. **Advisor:**
Each school assigns an advisor—often a teacher, counselor, or admissions officer—to assist you with academic, social, and personal matters. Consult your advisor whenever you need guidance.
 2. **ASSIST Representative:**
A designated ASSIST representative at your school serves as a local coordinator. They will check in with you monthly and are available for additional support alongside your advisor and teachers.
 3. **Roommates:**
Sharing a room is common. Work collaboratively with your roommate(s) to make decisions about furnishings and shared spaces. This is an opportunity to build meaningful relationships.
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Academic Life

1. **Course Requirements:**
 - ASSIST Scholars are typically required to take courses in **American History and English (or American Literature)**.
 - Additional courses, such as math, science, or languages, can align with your home school requirements and personal interests.
2. **Academic Expectations:**
 - You will be graded on the same standards as American students. Expect initial challenges, but these experiences will strengthen your academic and personal resilience.
 - If American History is unavailable, select a course that explores American culture or history.
3. **Convalidation for Spaniards, Serbians, and Bulgarians:**

- These students may need to follow specific processes for convalidation. ASSIST cannot guarantee convalidation, but your advisor and academic dean can guide you if your school offers qualifying courses.

Prohibited Activities

1. **Driver's Education and Driving:**

- ASSIST students are strictly forbidden from driving any motorized vehicle, including cars, motorcycles, and boats, or taking driver's education courses. Violating this rule will result in dismissal from the program.

2. **Diplomas:**

- You are accepted as a one-year exchange student, not as a candidate for a U.S. diploma. Under no circumstances should you request a diploma or change your grade level status.
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Managing Personal Finances

1. **Estimated Expenses:**

- Budget **\$1,800–\$2,500** for books, school fees, personal expenses, transportation, and entertainment. Bring a small portion upon arrival and arrange for your parents to deposit the remainder into your school account (if available).

2. **Payment Methods:**

- Have a credit or debit card for use during your stay.

3. **Planning:**

- Expenses can vary between schools. Before participating in special activities, confirm associated costs to ensure you have sufficient funds.
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Part-Time Work

1. **U.S. Regulations:**

- ASSIST students cannot take formal jobs but may engage in informal work (e.g., babysitting or tutoring) for no more than **10 hours per week**. Such work is often unpaid and viewed as a way to give back to the community.

2. **School Responsibilities:**

- Your academic and extracurricular commitments will likely leave little time for additional work.
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School Rules and Regulations

Your year in America will be guided by the rules of both ASSIST and your school. Understanding and adhering to these guidelines is crucial for a successful and enriching experience. While rare, violations of major rules have led to students being asked to return home, which is always a deeply disappointing outcome.

Student Handbook

Before your arrival, you will receive access to your school's student handbook, typically through a link provided by the school. Both you and your parents must review this document thoroughly. Each school has its unique policies, values, and expectations, which may differ from general assumptions. Familiarizing yourself with these rules will help you integrate smoothly into the school community.

ASSIST fully supports the rules of its partner schools and expects Scholars to follow them willingly and respectfully.

Substance Use Policy

- Alcohol, Smoking, and Drugs: The use of alcohol, tobacco (including smokeless tobacco and vaping devices), and illegal drugs is strictly prohibited at all ASSIST schools. This policy reflects both legal and ethical standards in the U.S. and is a critical rule for all students.
 - Exposure to Substance Use: If you encounter other students engaging in substance use and feel uncomfortable, reach out to a trusted faculty member or ASSIST staff for confidential support.
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Hazing and Harassment

ASSIST and its member schools are committed to fostering diverse, inclusive, and safe learning environments. All forms of harassment, hazing, cyberbullying, and sexual harassment are strictly prohibited.

- Familiarize yourself with your school's anti-bullying and harassment policies as outlined in the handbook.
 - Violations of these policies are taken very seriously and may result in suspension or dismissal.
 - If you experience or witness harassment, report it to your advisor, ASSIST representative, or a trusted school official immediately.
-

Participation in School Programs

Leadership and Involvement

American independent schools emphasize a well-rounded education that integrates academics, athletics, extracurricular activities, and community service. ASSIST Scholars have a proud tradition of contributing meaningfully both in and outside the classroom.

- **Engagement:** Take advantage of opportunities to join clubs, sports teams, and volunteer projects.
 - **Leadership:** Use your strengths and talents to take an active role in school activities. This is an excellent way to develop leadership skills and demonstrate your gratitude for the opportunity provided by ASSIST and your school.
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Classroom Involvement

Your perspective as an international student enriches classroom discussions.

- **Participation:** Speak up and share your insights as both a representative of your country and as an individual.
 - **Respectful Disagreement:** If you disagree with a viewpoint, do so constructively to promote meaningful dialogue.
 - **Teacher Relationships:** Build positive relationships with your teachers both in and outside the classroom.
-

Athletics

Athletics are an integral part of many American schools, fostering camaraderie, school spirit, and teamwork.

- **Participation:** Explore the sports offered at your school and consider joining a team, whether continuing a sport you already enjoy or trying something new.
 - **Benefits:** Athletics are a great way to make friends, immerse yourself in school culture, and stay active.
-

Extracurricular Activities

Beyond sports, schools offer a variety of extracurricular options, such as music, drama, debate, and student government.

- Explore Interests: Take part in as many activities as your schedule allows.
 - Community Contribution: Your involvement strengthens the school community and showcases your unique talents.
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Cultural Events

Schools frequently organize trips to museums, concerts, lectures, and plays. These events provide valuable insights into American culture and are great opportunities to bond with your peers.

Public Speaking

You may be invited—or volunteer—to speak about your country or school at events.

- Preparation: Create a presentation before your arrival, using tools like Canva or PowerPoint, to share your story effectively.
 - Recording: Request that your school record your presentation so you can share it with ASSIST.
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Vacations and Travel

Holiday Breaks

American families often invite international students to their homes for holidays.

- Planning: If you do not receive an invitation, inform your advisor or ASSIST representative in advance for assistance in making arrangements.
 - Transportation: You are responsible for travel costs unless arrangements are made with the host family.
-

Staying Beyond the School Year

If you wish to remain in the U.S. after the academic year ends, you must seek permission from ASSIST.

- Key Considerations:
 - Written permission from your parents is required.
 - You are responsible for all travel and living expenses during this period.
 - Your health insurance and visa must be extended at your own expense.

Further Study and Diplomas

ASSIST is a one-year exchange program, and Scholars are expected to return to their home countries upon completing the program.

- **Diploma Policy:** Students are not eligible to request a diploma or change their grade status at their American school.
 - **College Applications:** While you may pursue college applications upon returning home, your school and ASSIST can offer guidance and recommendations.
 - **Postgraduate Exception:** Students who have already graduated from secondary school in their home country may apply for further study in the U.S.
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Living with a Host Family

While many ASSIST Scholars will live in boarding schools, some of you will have the unique opportunity to live with a host family. This arrangement offers a truly immersive cultural experience, as you become part of an American family and community. Living with a host family can be one of the most enriching aspects of your ASSIST year, but it also requires effort, flexibility, and understanding to make it successful.

Expectations for Living with a Host Family

1. Building Relationships

- **Treat Your Host Family as Your Own:** Embrace them as you would your family at home, showing respect, kindness, and gratitude.
- **Get to Know Each Other:** Spend time together and learn about their interests, traditions, and routines. This will help foster a strong bond.

2. Communication is Key

- **Be Open and Honest:** Share your thoughts, needs, and concerns early and respectfully.
- **Ask Questions:** If you are unsure about family routines, expectations, or household rules, don't hesitate to ask.
- **Show Appreciation:** Simple gratitude acts like saying "thank you" or helping with chores go a long way.

3. Adapting to Family Life

- **Household Rules:** Every family has its own rules regarding curfews, use of technology, chores, and mealtime etiquette. Adapt to these norms, even if they differ from what you are used to.
- **Participate Actively:** Join in family activities, whether it's helping with dinner, attending events, or simply watching a movie together.

4. Sharing Your Culture

- **Be a Cultural Ambassador:** Share your traditions, foods, and experiences with your host family. They are as eager to learn from you as you are from them.
 - **Respect Their Culture:** Be open-minded about their customs and values, even if they differ from your own.
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How to Make the Most of Your Host Family Experience

1. Stay Engaged

Make an effort to spend quality time with your host family. Avoid isolating yourself, whether through excessive phone use or focusing solely on school activities.

2. Show Initiative

Offer to help with daily tasks, such as setting the table, washing dishes, or tidying shared spaces. These gestures show you care about being part of the household.

3. Be Respectful of Privacy

While you are part of the family, remember to respect their personal space and boundaries.

4. Manage Challenges Gracefully

Misunderstandings may arise due to cultural or communication differences. Address them calmly and respectfully. If needed, reach out to your ASSIST representative or school advisor for guidance.

Remember, You Are a Guest and a Family Member

Your host family has opened their home and hearts to you. This is a rare and special opportunity to experience life in another culture intimately. Treat this placement with respect, enthusiasm, and

gratitude, and it will undoubtedly become one of the most memorable and impactful parts of your ASSIST year.

By embracing the experience and building meaningful relationships, you will create lasting memories and leave a positive impression on your host family and their community.

Final Thoughts

By embracing the values and opportunities of your American independent school, you will grow as a student, leader, and global citizen. Approach this experience with curiosity, respect, and a willingness to adapt. Your commitment to excellence will pave the way for a successful year and reflect the values of the ASSIST program.



J. Martin Milne
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