

International Student Winter Recruitment Program

by

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Field Project

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to reveal the benefits of and recruitment strategies for enrolling international students within a school. This was created by using proper literary research explaining why international students enroll abroad, and how a school can accommodate students to make them comfortable in a different environment and culture. The method of implementation with the recruitment strategy takes place in the form of a winter program with four Chinese students. Findings include specific obstacles that this type of program may encounter, as well as what makes it successful. The conclusion validates the priorities a school must be aware of when recruiting international students.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Identify the Issue

It is important to find ways that a school can improve. A common school issue is a lack of alternative recruitment strategies. A way to solve this issue is the implementation of a winter international student recruitment program. During implementation, each international student is enrolled within a given American school. The purpose of this would be to provide each student with the social, cultural, and school experiences associated with attending a Lutheran school in the United States. This recruitment process will increase the likelihood of enrollment within a Lutheran elementary school, or an area Lutheran high school.

Importance of the Project

In the book of Matthew, we are instructed to “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” This type of field project provides a unique opportunity to bring “all nations” into one’s own community and school environment, as a way to instruct international children with God’s Word and allow the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts. An international student winter program is common within Catholic and independent schools; however, they are unique within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) at the middle school level. Many high schools within the WELS have at one point enrolled international

students. Enrolling non-Christian international students of all ages, allows schools the opportunity to share the saving gospel with others.

Project Purpose and Goal

The purpose of this project is to simulate a type of “vacation bible school” for international students. A standard vacation bible school for any WELS school creates exposure to a target audience (typically their own community) and an invitation to potentially enroll at the school in the future. In this situation, the target audience would be students from China and other countries in the future. They will be exposed to a Lutheran school and synod. A goal would be potential school enrollment in the future. In its first trial year, the program will enroll four students. There is the potential to add additional students each year, contingent upon surveys and data acquired after the program is completed. An important focus is to have these international students exposed to God’s Word throughout their time in the United States at a WELS school. There is a great opportunity with this recruitment program to fulfill the main goal as God’s children to share His teachings with others.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

A wide variety of literature and studies can be used to develop an international recruitment program. This research needs to be taken into consideration when creating and implementing the program.

International Enrollment Statistics

There is a large international student community in the USA with professionalized school programming to serve their needs and make use of cultural exchanges. Ruiz (2014) states that, “the United States hosted a record 819,644 international students, 21 percent of international students studying worldwide” (p.2). This is a trend that is projected to increase and grow exponentially.

Reasons for Enrollment

In order to enroll international students, one must understand how parents choose a given school. Nicholls (2018) researched the criteria that is used for this important decision. The quality of education was highlighted as a focus according to the study. Nicholls (2018) states that, “By far the most prevalent response was the quality of a US education; about 35% of the students identified the quality of the US education system as a reason for their choice” (p.605).

Another reason why international students come to the United States is to be immersed in the English language and to experience all aspects of American culture. Yun (2014) writes that “Foreign students and U.S. hosts have increased understanding of one another’s country in general, and of family life, religion, government, education, and economy in particular” (p.713). Learning about American culture at a young age has

become increasingly necessary for many businessmen across the globe, specifically in Asia. Ruiz (2014) states that, “Recent evidence links skilled migration to transnational business creation, trade and direct investment between the United States and a migrant’s country of origin” (p.2).

School Preparations

In order to provide a quality education for international students, faculty and staff need to be properly prepared to interact with a student of a different culture. Budrow (2018) writes that, “the teachers need to have an in-depth understanding of culturally and linguistically diverse and exceptional learning and develop intercultural competency” (p.866). This shows the importance of meeting with each teacher in advance to educate them on some main points of Chinese culture, and what to expect from the international students. Teachers should also be aware of some challenges that the students may expect. A common struggle that might be encountered is the language barrier. Bastien and Seifen-Adkins (2018) state that, “English proficiency is a key variable that has been found to greatly influence adjustment for international students” (p.1202). The students for this winter program have been taking English classes in China, however they will not be completely fluent in English. The teachers can be a support system in this struggle. Bastien and Seifen-Adkins (2018) go on to say that, “Social support has consistently been linked to their overall psychological well-being” (p.1202).

Student Accommodations

Each student’s psychological well-being can be extremely sensitive. For some of these children, this will be the first time they traveled outside their native country. Host families need to be sensitive to the possibility of culture shock causing anxiety for the

international student. Cross-cultural studies have been done as a way to discover potential changes in the psychological state of these students. Wang et al. (2018) state that, “They may experience anxiety or depression caused by culture shock, a sense of loss precipitated by their changed social and economic status, and feelings of discrimination or isolation” (p.823).

Any international student may experience culture shock and anxiety; however, research has been done to determine if there is a correlation between ethnicity and gender and the likelihood of “intercultural sensitivity” when attending an English-speaking school within the United States. In a 2017 study, Morales surveyed 116 students from ten different countries and found the country of origin did not play a significant role in a student’s potential anxiety. However, a difference in gender was apparent. “Several studies reported that females tend to exhibit higher intercultural sensitivity than their male counterparts” (p.40).

Summary

A review of past research is extremely beneficial when starting a new program for international students. Understanding challenges and positive strategies to overcome obstacles is vital. Proper research explains why international students may enroll, areas in which they may be uncomfortable, and how to provide the best possible experience for each student.

Chapter III: Implementation

Introduction

The implementation of this project created an exciting opportunity to perform a unique form of recruitment. This chapter includes the procedures to use during the implementation stage. After the recruitment program is completed, steps are taken to provide proper evaluation of its effectiveness. This is recorded as the results in this third chapter.

Procedures

Step one: The first step for the process of implementation is to discuss the potential program with school administration. A presentation at a school board meeting should include a blueprint budget from a school with a similar program. (Appendix A) This may be necessary for school administration approval. In the study, it was important that the school board understood all aspects of this program and proper communication is established.

Step two: Once stakeholder buy-in is achieved by administration, step two includes the actual recruitment of international students, and finding homestay families. The authors' recruitment took place alongside Pastor Joshua Yu, who leads a Chinese ministry at St. Johns in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. Host families are contacted in a way to keep each international students' comfort level in mind. As a way to reduce stress or anxiety, the school will recruit homestay families who are as the same age and gender of the international student.

Step three: The next step is to finalize a budget for the overall program within the proper spending parameters. In this study, the students generated \$5200 for this program. These finances are used to pay homestay families and fund the day-to-day agenda for the duration of the recruitment program and its activities.

Step four: Activities should be planned as a way to give each student a feeling for what it is like to live and study in America. Activities include group and individual events and activities as a way to experience American culture.

Step five: The final step is to educate faculty and staff on the expectations and goals of the recruitment program. Strategies on how to manage a multi-cultural classroom should be discussed. This provides some insight for what to expect from the international students within the classroom.

Artifacts

The data from this recruitment program can be used to display its overall results. The subjects and participants that provide this data includes the international students, host families, and the school faculty. Each of these members has a unique role within the program and is integral for the field project's success. All participants should provide two sets of data and feedback. One survey takes place before the program begins, and another after the program's completion. This data is collected in a variety of ways. Scaled questionnaires, surveys, interviews, and observations all should be used. These questions discovered information in reference to each surveyed persons' experience at a host family, school, and cultural activities. These are used to discover potential changes

that could improve the recruitment program. Data should be shared with the school board and the principal, to ensure constant communication during the program.

Results

There are three main points included for the results of the program's implementation. These results include the overall experiences that the students participated in. They can be categorized into social experiences with peers, American cultural experiences, and schooling experiences.

Social experiences include organized sleepovers and a group pizza party. These expose the students to interactions with peers and other common events that they could expect while attending a school in the United States. Living with a host family with students in a similar age group also adds to the social experience gained within the program.

American cultural experiences are a cornerstone of the project's implementation. Students should be exposed to American culture, and even more specifically what it is like to live in the Midwest within this particular program. In the study, tickets were purchased to see a local sports team, a Wisconsin Badgers basketball game. A group sledding trip was also organized for the program. Activities like this are integral to display the American culture to each student.

A main cultural adaptation from international students when experiencing a new culture typically involves the food. Host families are encouraged to expose the students to a variety of food if possible. Group meals and school hot lunches also acclimates international students to food included within American culture.

The results from the student's school experience are vital for the program. If the program's students are older, it is beneficial for them to tour Lutheran high schools during their stay. In the author's program, the students spent a day at both Wisconsin Lutheran High School and Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School. These two schools would be potential options for the students to attend for the upcoming school year. The author's other days of school attendance during the recruitment program as spent at St. Matthews Lutheran School. Exposure to religion classes within these schools is important for enrollment within a WELS school, but also to fulfill our recruitments program's overall goals. The students should complete each day's homework assignments, go to sports practices, and attend school athletic events to gain other school experiences.

Chapter IV: Reflective Essay

Introduction

The purpose for this field project is to use a relatively untapped student body within our WELS synod and ultimately enroll international students. This provides a great opportunity to spread God's Word to all nations.

Conclusions

Implementing social, American cultural, and school experiences as a way to lead international students to God's Word through Lutheran education should be analyzed thoroughly before and after the program takes place. Many interviews are to be performed, and surveys displaying both qualitative and quantitative data. In this particular study, separate surveys were given, one before the program, and another after the students had left. The reason these surveys took place was to connect what was learned from the field study through this data and apply its initial purpose. Data was then gathered by three groups; host families, faculty, and the international students.

The host families are integral in any recruitment program. A main question that stuck out to the author on the host family's "before arrival" survey was a ranking on a one to five scale, how nervous they were to meet the international student. Seven of the nine surveyed host family children wrote the highest score, a five for being nervous. Common thoughts included not knowing what the students would be like, or the fact that they had never met them before. A common challenge for the homestay parents before the international students arrived was how to shop for groceries that they thought the student would like to eat. The survey showed that homestay parents were grateful that there were many activities planned for the students. The interviews conducted with the

host families after the students had left indicated a positive experience for each family in the study. Three of the four families stated that it would have been beneficial to email or somehow get to know the student before he or she arrived. The main question for each family was if they would consider hosting a student again in the future. Each family said that they enjoyed the experience and would eagerly host another student in the future.

The school faculty is essential for the success of an international recruitment program. In this study, prior to each student's arrival, faculty were taught basics of Chinese culture as a way to properly prepare them for a multicultural classroom. A common concern from the faculty surveys was the comprehension level each student would have for the English language. Interviews with each staff member showed feelings of excitement for the international student's arrival. After the program's completion, faculty members mentioned each student's English was more advanced than they expected, however they did have some trouble communicating with students at times. Sharing God's Word with the students is what the faculty members enjoyed the most. The international students were eager to learn about the Christian faith within the classroom.

The opinions and feelings of each international student can be viewed as the most important data that show the overall strengths and weaknesses of the recruitment program. Planned activities, homestay families, and faculty preparations were all performed as a way to create a comfortable setting for their stay. The main question that was asked initially upon arrival however, was what the students hoped to gain and learn from their time within the United States. Each student wanted to see an American school

and what typical American life was like. This experience would dictate their potential schooling in the future, possibly in the United States.

In the study, each international student's interview and final survey gave great insight to various strengths and weaknesses within the program. Two main challenges were apparent. One challenge was that it was hard for the students to understand the day-to-day school schedule. The school schedule was described to each student only on the day they arrived. The other difficulty was that the students were initially nervous to meet the homestay families and their student peers. The students met their homestay families for the first time after their first school day. The strengths of the program included the school atmosphere and planned activities. In their opinion, the international student's peers and teachers were friendly and kind. The various activities introduced them to an American school, lifestyle, and culture.

The students were asked to state the likelihood on a one to five scale, if they would like to attend a Lutheran school in the future. The four international students each entered a five that they would like to come back to America for a full year.

This data from the study was shared with school board members as a way to summarize each person's perspective in regard to the international student recruitment program. After hearing each account and gaging its overall strengths and weaknesses, it was decided to continue working towards increased recruitment for the upcoming school year.

Recommendations

The study showed that communication is an area which could be improved upon. Connecting host families with recruitment students prior to their visit to the United States

would create less anxiety upon their arrival. Information about the school could also be shared with each student before attending the school. Class schedules, teacher's information, and curriculum could be provided in advance for each international student. These are ways a program can improve, as a way to spread God's Word within a Lutheran school.

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Appendix A: School Board Budget Structure Example

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TUITION

	LEVEL 1 PLACEMENT	LEVEL 2 PLACEMENT	LEVEL 3 PLACEMENT
Tuition & Additional Course Fees*	\$9300 + \$3700	\$9300 + \$1850	\$9300
Host Family payment	\$4500	\$4500	\$4500
Agency fee	Depends on agency	Depends on agency	Depends on agency
TOTAL	\$17,500 + agency fee	\$15,650 + agency fee	\$13,800 + agency fee
Additional Options			
Insurance**	\$780 - \$1370	\$780 - \$1370	\$780 - \$1370
NLHS Hot lunch	\$513	\$513	\$513

LEVEL 1 PLACEMENT – Students placed in level one take two additional English courses with emphasis on speaking, listening, reading, and writing in order to equip them with the skills needed for more advanced academic coursework in future years. The two courses are *English as a Second Language* and *Language Development*.

LEVEL 2 PLACEMENT – Students placed in level two take one additional English course with emphasis on reading and writing in order to equip them with advanced grammar and development of writing styles and skills. The course is *Written Communication using English as a Second Language*.

LEVEL 3 PLACEMENT – Students are ready for the rigor of all academic coursework without any additional specialized English courses needed.

*If a student arrives after the start of the semester, the student still pays the entire tuition amount. Any host family fees would begin on the first of the month.
The first sport in which International students participate per year is covered by their tuition.

**Insurance estimate based on ten months of coverage. The range in amount is given because there are three coverage options available.