



Pointers For Parents

Travel Prepares Students For Success With Personal Growth And Character Building

(NAPSA)—The keys to your child's success in school, college and beyond may be the ones that fit the locks on his or her suitcase.

That's because, advises Valeria Ramdin, Ph.D., Assistant Dean, School of Nursing, Bouvé College of Health Sciences, Northeastern University, Massachusetts, with colleges increasingly setting global readiness as a goal for graduates, it's crucial to instill and nurture a global understanding in our young people.

Even though the Internet allows you to virtually "travel," nothing compares to experiencing the real thing, taking in the sights, sounds, even smells. If you've been to Germany, for example, you can talk about the Berlin Wall: You've been there, you've touched it, you've talked with people who've been through that experience. You don't need the pages of a book to make it come alive.

What Parents Can Do

There are several steps, Dr. Ramdin says, parents can take to help their kids develop a global awareness. These include:

- **Let them explore, abroad or close to home.** Museums, theaters and concerts can all be places to learn.

- **Restaurants can be a window into another culture,** an invitation to learn and understand.

- **On planes or other public transportation,** sit apart and talk with other people.

- **Be a role model.** Show a curiosity that lets your children be curious. When they make a discovery, have that sense of "Wow, tell me more" that encourages them to explore.

Adds clinical psychologist Dr. Isaiah Pickens, educational travel can be very useful.

Research has found, he says, that in today's global society, people have actually splintered more than they've united. Many people



Student travel can lead young people to a new understanding of the world and themselves.

have a tendency to stick with others who think the way they do.

Students' perspective of the world—what they believe and the way they read different situations—really influences how they behave academically and socially.

One of the most effective ways to broaden students' perspectives is through exposure to different kinds of experiences. And nothing immerses a person in new experiences like traveling in an educated way—getting informed about other cultures and talking through the nuances with fellow travelers.

It's a way to understand what everyday life is like in another country, not just the tourist perspective.

Growing Independence

Many students who travel or study abroad haven't been away from their parents before. They suddenly have to rely on other people and the resources within themselves to navigate a foreign world. This can open their eyes to alternative ways to handle situations. After these unfamiliar (but teacher-supervised) situations and activities that promote students' growth and confidence, parents

can often see how the experience enhances their child's level of responsibility and prepares him or her for the next level of school.

Practicing Empathy

The most helpful takeaway from travel may be learning how to connect. Empathy, or being able to understand the world from another person's perspective, is what enables people to connect to each other as humans. Through community service abroad, students can gain a better understanding of their position in the world relative to those in other countries. They can become much more aware of global issues—and more appreciative of the opportunities available here in the U.S.

As students transition into college, they will have to live and work with people from different cultures or regions. Traveling gives them a great head start on how to connect with others in a meaningful way. When kids, while they're still developing, can connect with other people and cultures, that empathy can become embedded in their worldview as adults.

Children can expand their knowledge and awareness in many ways, Dr. Ramdin points out, but if that does not include a cross-cultural understanding, they will be falling short somewhere. They're missing a worldview that's essential in an increasingly global society. That's where student travel with an organization such as People to People can come in. A leader in guided educational student travel for over 50 years, it has helped more than 500,000 students experience new cultures and encounter new places.

Learn More

To learn how your child can be a People to People Ambassador, check out an information meeting near you. Visit www.PeopletoPeople.com or call (800) 669-7882 for meeting dates and locations.