Education Travel & Culture

A Non-profit Corporation for Student Exchange

Perceived Lack of English Proficiency

In order to be accepted on the ETC program, our students have to have sufficient English skills to understand basic English and to participate in conversations. However, some students may not be very communicative when they first arrive in the U.S. Communication in a foreign language is extremely tiring and can be frustrating. Regional accents and faster speech might make understanding language harder than anticipated. Depending upon the student's cultural background or personality, he/she might feel embarrassed or too shy to ask people to repeat what they have said.

In most cases a supportive environment can help students become more comfortable with the English language. The following are suggestions for you to support your student:

- Speak slowly and ask your student if he/she understood what you were saying.
- Ask your student to tell you in his/her own words what they understood from the conversation, especially when discussing something important (some students are too embarrassed to admit that they didn't understand what was said).
- Allow your student to take breaks and don't take it personally if he/she needs to withdraw from conversations.
- Encourage your student to communicate.
- Assure your student that it is okay to make mistakes and remind him/her that mistakes are some of the best opportunities to learn.
- Compliment your student's efforts to communicate in a foreign language and if you notice improvements, let him/her know.

If, despite a supportive environment, your student's ability to communicate in English does not improve or the school voices concerns to you; please contact your local coordinator and they will help to determine what additional steps should be taken in order to overcome the communication barriers.