



## Too Much Contact with Home

Many students deal with their feelings of homesickness and culture shock by seeking out close communication with family and friends from their home country. It is particularly tempting for students to reach out on a daily basis when home is just a “mouse-click” away. However, excessive communication with home will often contribute to feelings of homesickness and many students are not aware of this fact.

As a general guideline, ETC recommends that students may call home twice a month and e-mail once a week (this general rule also applies to the use of personal laptops, cell phones and i-pods). If your student contacts friends or family from home on a daily basis and withdraws from contact with you and other people in the community, a one-on-one conversation will be necessary to address the issue.

Try to get the student to talk about culture shock and homesickness. Sometimes listening can be helpful to the student. When talking with the student, the following suggestions could be useful:

- ❖ Remind him/her that other exchange students share similar feelings of homesickness.
- ❖ Assure the student that he/she is allowed to feel homesick but that he/she is also allowed to have a good time in the U.S! Having fun away from home is not being disloyal to friends and family at home.
- ❖ Encourage the student to make friends through shared activities such as sports or community service. Help the student to find opportunities to get involved in the school and the host community.
- ❖ Point out that talking with home on a daily basis is like never really leaving home. By physically being in the U.S. and mentally still being at home the student lessens his/her chance for a successful year on the program.
- ❖ Allow the student to stay in contact with home but encourage the frequency of communication to be within the recommended guidelines

It is not always the student who initiates contact with home. The natural parents may be struggling with their child being away from home and not realize that frequent contact is increasing the homesickness. In this situation, the overseas partners will talk with the natural parents and explain that the contact is having a negative impact. If you need support addressing this issue with your student, please contact your local coordinator.

Please note: a host parent or ETC representative must NEVER prohibit a student from contacting home- under any circumstances. The goal is to help the student adjust by encouraging them to limit the contact to a degree that allows them to feel comfortable and to have a successful program.