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Survey: English Most Important Subject For High School Exchange Students
PAX - Program of Academic Exchange Surveys Teens Ahead of U.S. Exchange Year

PAX - Program of Academic Exchange reported this week that high school exchange students arriving in the United States for the academic year were most looking forward to studying English during their stay.

The poll was conducted when nearly 200 teenagers from countries as diverse as China, Germany, and Thailand attended PAX arrival orientation before traveling to their host families living in 30 different states across the country. When asked about the subjects they most looked forward to learning in the U.S., more than a quarter chose English (26%). U.S. History (24%), science (18%), and mathematics (17%) rounded out the top answers.

"We continue to see students from dozens of countries traveling to the United States to prove their English language skills," observed PAX executive Nicholas Burtscher. "While they already have the necessary language abilities to be successful at their American high schools, they are excited about the unique opportunity to learn and improve in an English-speaking country—both in and out of the classroom. They realize that English will be a requirement for future leaders in our global economy."

During their orientation and before heading out to their diverse communities across the nation, students also had the opportunity to tour New York City. An evening visit to Times Square was the group's overwhelming favorite. Lady Liberty had to settle for a distant second with just 20%. "Times Square...it is..." Diego from Mexico began—a bit overwhelmed. "It is really beautiful at night."

Seeing world-famous landmarks and bonding together helped ease some of the nervousness ahead of the unique challenges a year abroad poses. "Seeing that others are worried about the same things was reassuring," wrote one student. By the orientation's end, the visiting students were relaxed and ready to head out—even enjoying a bit of friendly civic bragging. "I know my area is the most unique with traditional Cajun foods," said Victoria from Spain—headed to Lafayette, LA. Less concerned about the cuisine, Diego summed up his enthusiasm like a true future Hoosier and with only two words, "Indianapolis Colts!"

While perhaps not surprising that studying English continues to attract international students, PAX staff does report surprises during re-entry orientation at the end of the year. Students acquire very different accents in Louisiana and Indiana.

About PAX

Founded in 1990, PAX – Program of Academic Exchange is a not-for-profit educational organization and one of a select few U.S. Department of State-designated Exchange Visitor Programs chosen to participate in the prestigious U.S. government sponsored Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) and Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) programs. Each year, more than 1,100 teenagers visit the U.S. as PAX exchange students. For information on how you can host an exchange student from another country, please visit www.pax.org/families or call 800.555.6211.