

“Should We Host an International Student *This* School Year?” – Our Story.

By Casey Mayben

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All DCCS families have been given the opportunity to host an international student for the 2024-2025 school year. Perhaps you’ve hesitantly considered inquiring for more information. Maybe you gave it a brief thought and then resorted to all the reasons why this isn’t the year.

*We are too busy. We don’t have a lot of extra space. Our own kids would have to share a room for nine months (heaven forbid!). Our family is complicated. We have a vacation planned, and we don’t have room for one more. It just isn’t the right time. Maybe next year.*

These are valid concerns .... Well, maybe not that your kids would suffer from sharing a bedroom for a season – it might actually be *really* good for them. And while I am in the thick of debunking excuses .... Here’s a newsflash: ALL families are complicated! But, I get it, oh do I get it. My husband and I have all the reasons. We are incredibly busy. We both coach a collegiate sport. I leave my house at 4:45 in the morning and am often not home for the night until 9:30 pm. I began a new job this year. We have church commitments, work commitments, school commitments, family, bible study, housework, yard work, projects, so many things. Our relatives from Oregon stay with us more often than I want to admit. We travel—a lot. We’ve already done our time when we hosted a delightful student from Germany in 2015. Our daughters were in high school and still living at home. It made sense to host back then, and it makes no sense to commit to this now.

But here we are, wrapping up our time with this beautiful girl from Mexico. God knew she needed to be a part of our family, and He knew we needed her. This has been a special journey that we would not trade.

When Ms. Carolina asked if we would host an International student this year, I flipped through my file of reservations (excuses). And then I said, “Yes!” The Lord was tugging at my heart to offer *one more* student the opportunity to attend our school. These students go through a lengthy process to apply to do something *really* hard. Their families make tremendous sacrifices to send their students here. *Would I be willing to send one of my precious children to another country for an entire school year? What type of family would I hope they get to be a part of? Is God calling us to be that for one of His sweet kids?*

Our lives did not slow down with the arrival of our host daughter. But she taught our family that our hearts could be expanded and we could love another child like our own. It wasn’t always easy. She was timid when she arrived. There was an obvious language and culture barrier. She came to learn from us, but we had to learn from her first. School was challenging at first. She was homesick. She received sad news from home that devastated her. God had her in our care, and He equipped us (and the fabulous DCCS community) to support her through hard things.

Ms. Carolina and her team offered amazing support throughout the year. She understands the commitment and provides respite times for the families and the students. She takes all the International students on trips over fall break, Christmas break, spring break, and several long weekends. She is available to answer questions, problem solve, support, and encourage at every turn.

And the next thing you know, you’re sitting around your kitchen table after dinner (one of the rare times dinner is at home at a reasonable time), and you’re laughing uncontrollably with your student. She is recapping the day, sharing funny stories, watching videos of the new dog at home (that she can’t wait to meet), and enjoying sweet fellowship. The conversation continues to the backyard, where you’ve developed a nightly habit of roasting marshmallows around the fire because your girl from Mexico LOVES s’mores! Our

host daughter taught us to slow down. Communicating with her took a different effort. We had to speak slowly, listen carefully, and think through what we were really trying to communicate. She was drinking out of a firehose when she came. Now she is settled, comfortable, her FUNNY self, and undoubtedly a forever part of our family.

I encourage you to consider this sweet opportunity. If you have children in your home, it is so good for them to share their home, their family, their time, their things, and their lives. If your children are grown (like ours), having a teenager in your home is always good for the soul. Truly!

Life is short, and the years go by so fast. We have students who want to spend a year in the U.S. If we cannot find placements, they may go elsewhere. At DCCS, they will hear the gospel, be loved, and find community.

We could have easily justified turning down this opportunity and then moved on with our lives. But God knew we needed to open our hearts and our home. I am so thankful He prompted the "yes."