



Did you know...???

New materials for US-American and German Host families

The Transatlantic Orientation Exchange-Project
2007/2008

Background

A grant from the former Marshall Fund was given to AFS GER and AFS USA to develop handbooks and training materials for Host families

Target Groups

Families in the USA
hosting a German
student

&

Families in Germany
hosting an American
student



Project Timeline

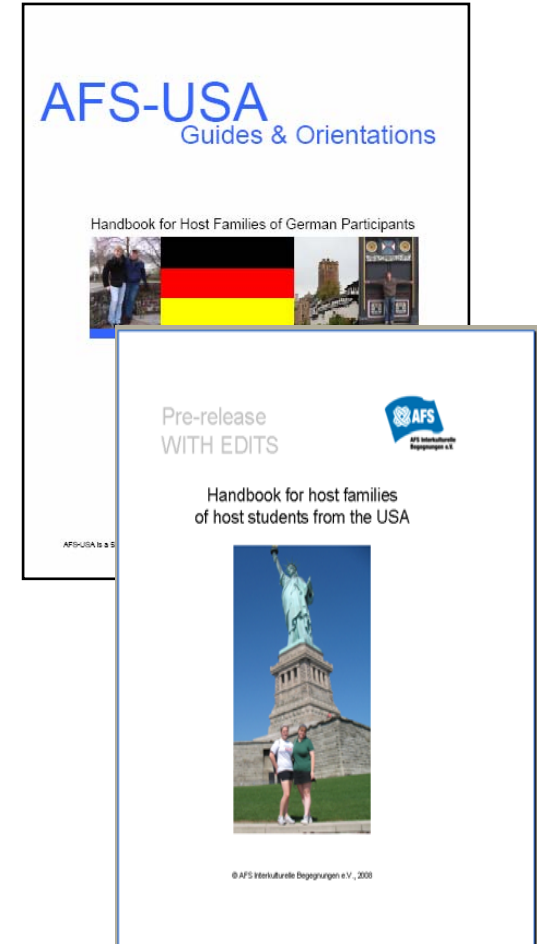
- **January 07** – Selection of groups of 6 volunteers and one staff person in the USA and Germany
- **Spring 07** - Host Family Survey in both countries
- **Summer 07** - Literature review
- **Fall 07** first international meeting (Bad Hersfeld)
- First national meetings
- **Spring 08** second international meeting (Chicago)
- **Spring 08 – Winter 09**
Training for host families, volunteers & staff
- **Fall 08** – second national meetings
- **September 08 – August 09**
Evaluation phase



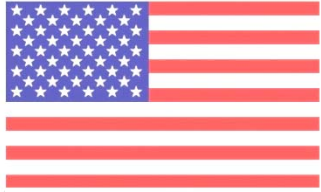
The two Handbooks

Topics in both handbooks

- What is culture?
- Generalizations and Stereotypes
- Communication Styles ←
- Space ←
- Patriotism
- Relationships ←
 - – sibling, teacher, parent, peer
- Nudity and Sexuality
- School systems
- Alcohol and curfews
- Mealtime



The Handbooks



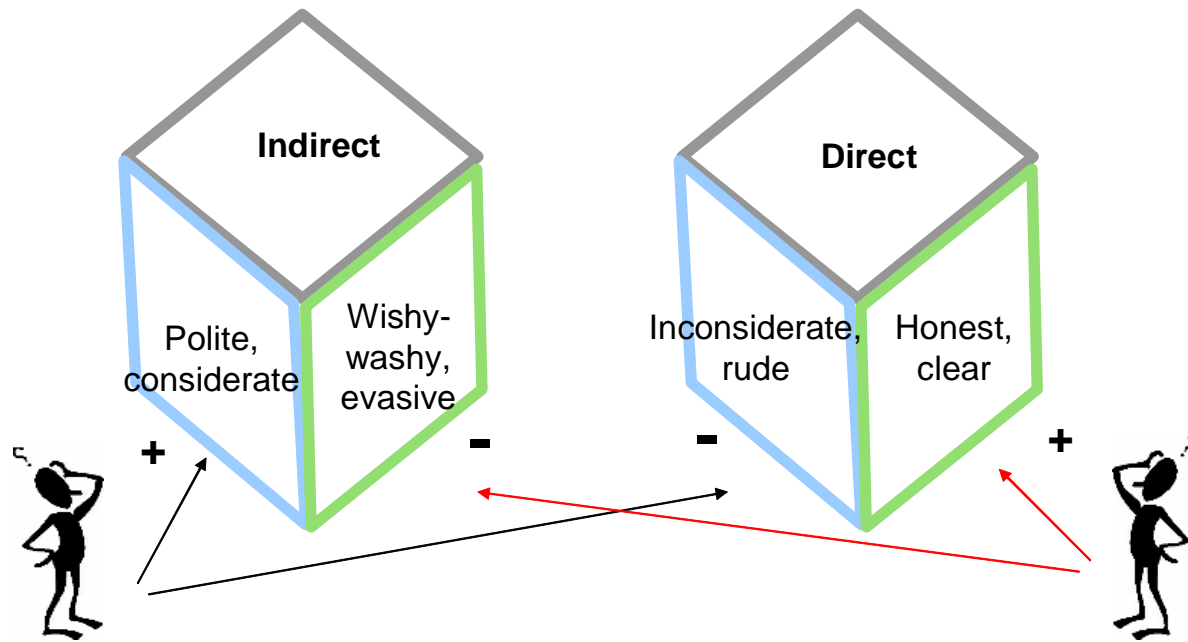
Culture-specific topics in each handbook.



- **Laws and rules**
- **Religion**
- **Diversity**
- **Celebrating birthdays**
- **Support network in schools**
- **Vacation**
- **Communication styles - complaining**

- **American Values**
 - **Future vs. Past Orientation**
 - **Efficiency and speed**
 - **Modesty and hygiene**
- **Need to speak German**
- **Grades and recognition**
- **School spirit**
- **Transportation and mobility**

Communication Styles



U.S. Host Parent

German Student

How friendships are formed



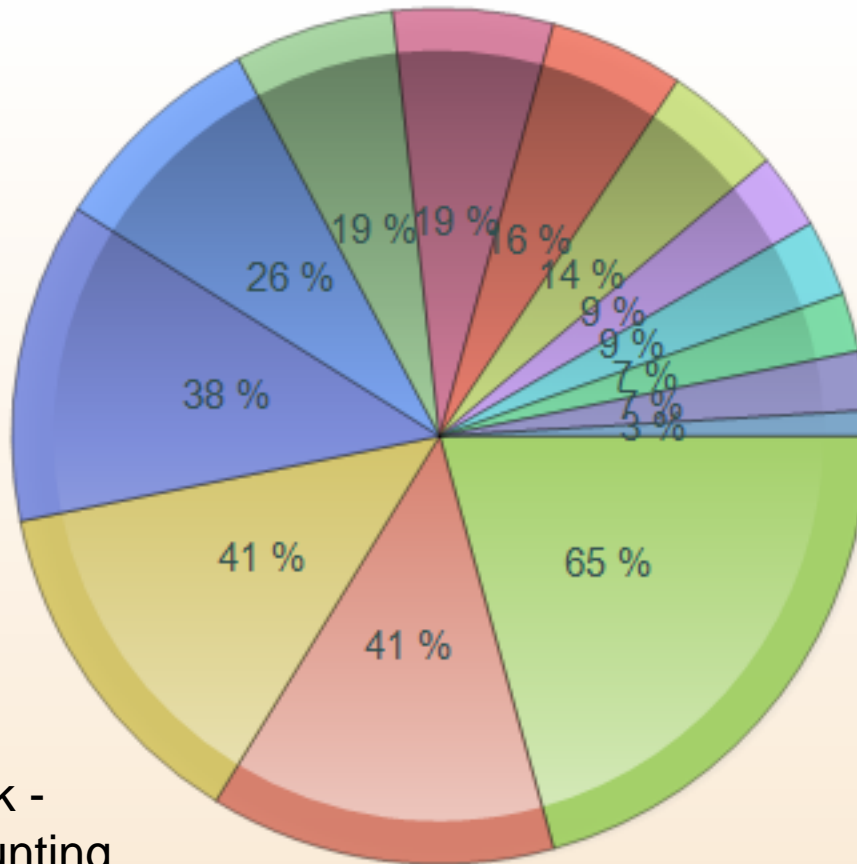
In general, people from “coconut cultures” may appear to be cold, but once the “ice is broken,” very deep and long-lasting friendships can develop



People from “peach cultures” are generally very open and friendly and seem to let people come very close to them. However, acquaintances can disappear as fast as they come and close friends tend to be fewer in number than in coconut cultures.

Which sections of the handbook have been most helpful in building understanding between you and your host son or daughter?

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Communication Styles | Food and Food Culture | What is Culture? | Holidays and Travel |
| Personal Space | Patriotism | Religion | Nudity and Sexuality |
| Relationships | Laws and Rules | Dating | Other, please specify |
| School System | Diversity | | |



Preliminary feedback -
100 families and counting

Feedback on School Info

- *The info on the German high school and the lack of extracurricular activities there/difference in school spirit is also helpful... Being on a sports team is really helping her meet friends. However, she was not quite prepared for the intensity of the team.*
- *(German students) are not used to doing as much homework was a much needed tip. Our county has very high expectations regarding homework, and this has been somewhat of an adjustment.*
- *My husband and I found it very useful, especially the section that addressed the German students attitude toward school (tests and homework). Our German daughter talked about how acceptable it is for everyone to copy each other during tests, even explaining how she "hid" notes. If I hadn't read the handbook I would not have known how to address the situation.*

Feedback on Communication Style

- *We found our student to be very direct (almost blunt) as you said. It helped tremendously knowing that in advance - and she has already made good progress in this area (free to share honestly, yet more appropriately).*
- *The communication style difference was the only thing that seemed very different for us. Our student is very sweet and kind. However, her speaking style is very direct and if we were not prepared we would have thought she was unhappy or critical. This section truly helped us to communicate comfortably from the very beginning.*
- *Initial perception of our student being "mean" by my daughter and friends was replaced with the feeling of respect once she understood the style of direct communication*

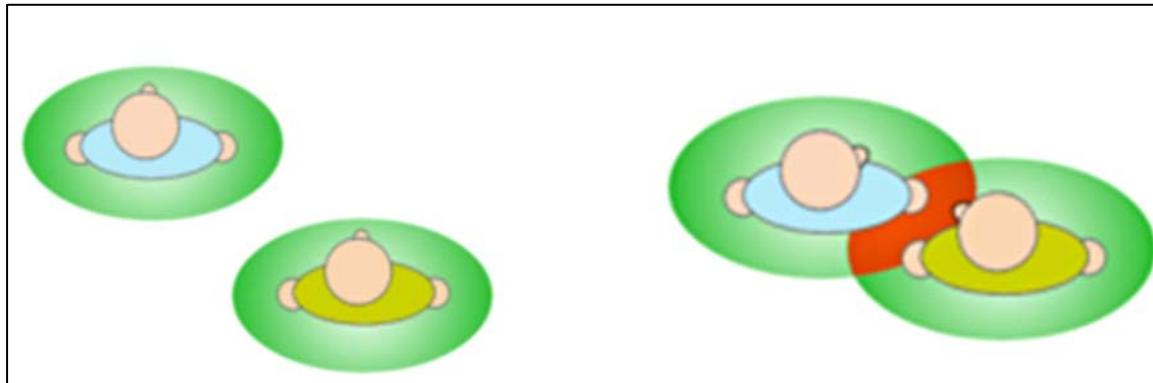
Feedback on Peach/Coconut

- *He is a hard nut to crack, but we are trying I think you nailed it with that analogy .*
- *The peach/coconut explanation was very interesting. Our exchange student has only just arrived, so I can not determine if the coconut description truly applies to him. However, I think the peach description truly describes how I and my family interact with people. It is VERY interesting!*
- *Our student is very communicative. Good sense of humor and has not had a coconut dynamic so far.*

Space

*“For Americans 100 years are a long time –
for Europeans 100 kms are a long distance”*

How does this affect the feeling of space and the need for space?



Let's try it out....



Where to find your copy...

- The *Handbook for Host Families of German Participants* is available on the [AFS Wiki](#) under [Host Family Pre-Arrival Orientation Resources](#).
- Encourage your [liaisons](#) of German participants to access and review the online version.
- [Copies of the handbook](#) have been sent to all [AT Support](#) and [Hosting Coordinators](#), and all [08-09 Host Families](#) of German participants.
- New [Host Family Post-Arrival Orientation Activities](#), generated as a result of this project, are available on the [AFS Wiki](#).