

CONVERSATION PARTNERS

International students appreciate having a mentor come alongside as they navigate life in a new culture. Using English as their primary means of communication both inside and outside the classroom, an international student can often feel isolated and on their own.

In becoming a Conversation Partner, a local community member can very practically help meet at least one, if not all, of these major felt needs of international students:

- ★ Improve English skills
- ★ Understand and adapt to American culture
- ★ Make meaningful, personal connections

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A CONVERSATION PARTNER?

- ✓ Weekly be in touch with their friendship partner by phone or virtually
- ✓ Meet 2x a monthly meet in person (or virtually face-to-face)
- ✓ Commit to serving in this capacity for at least one semester
- ✓ Be consistent, compassionate and hospitable

This time should be simple and fun! Include the student in practical activities with you and/or your family and share aspects of your cultures with one another. While conversational English is a priority, your friendship with your student will certainly benefit the student's grasp of English. Listen to your partner's priorities and goals and determine together how your meeting times should be used.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT FROM IFI?

We commit to being a resource and support to you as you will be to the students. IFI will train and equip you to be the best conversation partner and advocate you can be in both online and in person settings. We pledge to follow up with you regularly, help you address student needs, and be a phone call or email away to discuss any difficulty you may face.



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meet all year round! Most international students arrive in the fall, but we have requests for Conversation Partners throughout the year.

WHEN WOULD I BE NEEDED?

After we approve your Conversation Partner form, we will begin looking for a student to match. If you are a single person, we will make sure to connect you with a student of the same gender. After we match you with a student, we will send you their contact info for you to initiate a connection. After you have connected we will follow up to see how your time went.

HOW WILL I AND/OR MY FAMILY BE MATCHED WITH A STUDENT?

It can be very intimidating for an international student to make the first contact, especially if they are using a language that is not their first language. Please do not give up after one attempt; try to contact the student several times. Most students prefer texting or WhatsApp over email or phone calls, but email is good for initial contact. After you connect with them, use whichever app they prefer to text with. Sometimes it doesn't work out with a student and that's ok! If after these attempts you are still unsuccessful, please contact IFI so that we can either facilitate the contact or match you with another student.

WHAT ABOUT SHARING MY FAITH?

Your commitment to the student should be that of unconditional friendship and love. Please be sensitive to the fact that the students come from many different cultural and religious backgrounds and may have little or no previous exposure to Christianity. We hope that over time you will build a relationship of trust which would be an appropriate context for sharing spiritually. We ask that you not force spiritual discussion but be sensitive to the student and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. In many cases, the students are very open to such discussions. It is appropriate to include your faith naturally as it relates to your life experiences.

Questions?

Contact Beth Tucker
b.tucker@ifipartners.org

westlafayette.ifipartners.org

