GAPP Meeting Minutes

February 23, 2015

Attendees:

All GAPP families present

Old Business

**Health Forms:**

Frau Timmermann handed out the health forms. GAPP families were urged to complete the form if their son/daughter had a physical late last summer or in fall. Those participants who need a physical for the upcoming school year should have it prior to departure. Frau Timmermann asked that all health forms be returned by the April GAPP meeting.

**Contact List**

Phone lists were re-distributed. Attendees were asked to make updates to the information as needed.. Frau Timmermann will made changes and will send a copy to Germany for Frau Biroga to update the German host families’ contact information as well. American families might have to assist with collecting this information as well, if Frau Biroga is unable to.

**Financial Obligations:**

Frau Timmermann reminded families of the GAPP policy which requires that all financial obligations to ACS are in good standing. Another check of accounts will be made in May prior to departure.

New Business

**Itinerary 2015 and Trip Costs**

Frau Timmermann distributed the preliminary itinerary for the upcoming trip. She showed a power point of the sites to be visited and information about the city of Landshut and the Hans-Leinberger Gymnasium. A few dates might change yet prior to our arrival and the trip to BMW is also not a certainty. Also, one of the school dates will be a visit to the Carl Orff Elementary School, which has yet to be determined.

Frau Timmermann then distributed the costing sheet per participant. Frau Timmermann was conservative in her cost estimates. She used an exchange rate of $1.50 = 1 Euro. She also included the costs for the BMW trip even though it has not been booked. Frau Timmermann shared with the families that this time most of the costs used in the calculation came directly from the internet sites and were compared them to those from 2013, since Frau Biroga’s costing sheet was not as detailed as in the past. Frau Timmermann also solicited quotes for the joint field trips and the possible BMW tour directly from the bus company herself. Total costs for each participant equal just over $2600 per person. With the funds from the fundraising and the Goethe Institut grant, each participant will only need to pay $2000. That means that each family only owes another $500 by the next payment date of March 15th. Frau Timmermann also let the families know that she took advantage of the very favorable exchange rate of $1.13 = 1 Euro and wire transferred the money to her GAPP bank account in Germany.

**Handling Money**

Frau Timmermann advised that each GAPP student set up a checking account with a debit card to use while in Germany. Accounts need to be checking, not just savings because the German banking system doesn’t communicate well with those accounts linked only to a savings account. Students will not be able to access their money if they do not have their debit card linked to a checking account.

Frau Timmermann suggested that students get an account set up during spring break and then practice using it so that they can remember their pin number. Participants will also need to tell their bank the dates that the card will be used in Germany so that the bank does not put a hold on it due to fraud suspicion. Additionally, there is a limit on the $ amount one can withdraw at a time. This is typically $250, which does not equal 250 Euro.

Frau Timmermann advised against using a credit card to get cash because this equates to a loan. Typically, the fees charged are also higher. Families might want to send a credit card in case of an emergency. However, she emphasized that students should use their debit cards for purchases. Families can track the amount of money being used and either replenish the account or speak to their son/daughter about their spending habits. Visa or MasterCard are generally accepted in most gift or major stores.

Frau Timmermann also advised against the pre-loaded Visa cards. Frau Timmermann experienced difficulties using the card to get cash from the bank and other GAPP students have also not been able to access their money. Most stores also did not accept them. Additionally, the fees to use them tend to be higher than those on the debit cards.

The need to exchange money prior to departure was also discussed. Because the students are going directly to their host families, Frau Timmermann did not see an urgent need for students to have cash prior to arrival in Germany. However, if families wanted to take advantage of the favorable exchange rate, then Frau Timmermann suggested that each family order 100 Euro which she estimated would be about $120. Frau Timmermann will work with Pam Skifton at Wood Trust. All families, with the exception of Becker and Gudelis families, wanted Frau Timmermann to place the order with Wood Trust.

Spending money amounts were also touched on. Frau Timmermann suggested that families should budget about $100 per week for miscellaneous expenses, e.g. ice cream, souvenirs, snacks and beverages. In the past some students have spent as little as under $200 or as much as $1200. Typically, boys have spent less than the girls.

Frau Timmermann reminded families that the students will need money to buy their meals on the flights and also money for snacks in the airports and a short stop on the bus ride home.

**Cell Phones/Tablets/Other Devices**

Mrs. Rustad requested that students be allowed to have cell phones with them or other devices since these double as their cameras. Frau Timmermann reiterated her concern with students being tied more to their devices than spending time with their host families. Mrs. Rustad suggested that if the device should become a problem, then that student(s) should have the privilege removed. Mr. Erdmann also stated that the Boy Scouts do have a policy about proper electronics use. Frau Timmermann requested that Mr. Erdmann send her a copy of this policy and she would review it with AHS administration. Frau Timmermann emphasized that students need to take advantage of the opportunity to immerse themselves in the German language and culture and should not be shutting themselves into their rooms to communicate with friends and family back home instead of spending time with their host families or being aware of their surroundings while on field trips.

Shoes:

The question about shoes arose. Frau Timmermann suggested that participants have a good, leather upper walking shoe or a sturdy water-repellant shoe. Frau Timmermann advised against mesh due to its inability to repel water. MR. Newton held up his tennis shoes as an example of what Frau Timmermann advises. Ballerinas, slippers and flip flops will not be acceptable footware for the type of walking students need to do in Germany.

GAPP T-Shirts:

T-shirts for the group will be ordered. Three students offered to coordinate this. Frau Timmermann feels that there might be enough money in the budget to cover the T-shirt costs for the participants and their partners. She will know more once the T-shirt quotes have been received. Mrs. Rustad volunteered to assist the students. Creative Designs was also suggested as a possible local source.

“Luggage Tags”

Frau Timmermann showed a sample of the ribbons which have been used in the past to easily identify participants’ luggage. She suggested a length of 18 inches for the ribbon. Mrs. Bohn agreed to take care of getting the tags for 16 travelers with two bags each. Frau Timmermann suggested that she might want to make a few extras (40 total) in case some get lost while in Germany.

Pre-Departure Mass

Frau Timmermann shared with the group that since we depart on a Sunday we cannot get a priest to say mass prior to the bus leaving for the airport. This also happened in 2013. For the 2013 trip arrangements had been made for the group to attend St. Peter and Paul parish since Father Altman was the AHS chaplain. Unfortunately, Father Altman had other travel plans arise which made him unavailable for the 2013 departure date, so the 2013 participating families chose to attend mass at their own parishes and receive a special blessing/prayer from their own parish priest.

Mrs. Oertli volunteered to see if Father Menzel might be able to come to AHS to give a special blessing to the group at 12:30 Sunday, June 14th.

Host Family Gifts

Frau Timmermann passed out a list of gift suggestions that participants might want to purchase to bring to their host families.

Final Pre-Departure Meeting

Due to conflicts with soccer and baseball, the GAPP families agreed to move final pre-departure meeting to Wednesday, April 29th starting at 5 p.m. Confirmation obligations should be complete by this time, but the earlier time was selected in case some parishes have any confirmation follow-up sessions.

Tentative Agenda: Student Behavior Expectations, Form Signing,