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Would you like to start a student exchange program with us?

Graz, December 2011

I am writing this letter to ask if your school might be interested in offering your students the opportunity to experience European culture through an exchange program with like-aged students from our school in Austria.

GIBS is a bilingual (German-English) senior secondary school with a strong focus on modern languages. The language of instruction at GIBS is mainly English. Apart from the focus on languages, we try to encourage respect for cultural diversity in the global village.

One of our most successful projects in this direction is an international exchange program that we regularly organize for our students.

We have arranged many such exchange programs with high schools in France, Spain, Scotland and the US (Souix Falls, Little Rock, Tennessee). The students have always profited from this wonderful experience. Many of the exchanges have become regular programs, such as our annual exchanges with Rennes (France), Sevilla (Spain) and Kansas City. With our school currently expanding, including a move to a new campus in Graz, we are now looking for new partner schools in the US.

Let me tell you what we can offer and what our student exchange programs are usually like.

Part A:

We would invite a group from your school to stay with our students in host families for 5-10 days and participate in lessons at our school. The lessons can be our regular lessons or they could also be special lessons designed for your students' needs and interests. (e.g. language instruction, cultural background, history, music, architecture...)

We can also organize outings and trips in the surrounding area so your students can see some of the beautiful medieval towns, cities and castles in Austria where Old World flair meets the Digital Age. Before or after this hosting phase, your group could add a few days in Vienna or Salzburg to round off the experience.

Part B:

For our students we would like to experience the local color of your area. We would need host families who would be willing to accommodate our students for about a week (usually 8-9

days). Usually our students accompany the hosting students to normal classes -- that way we do not disturb regular class time by putting too many visitors into the same class. We would like to see some of the interesting places in your area and experience everyday life and school-life in the US. After our stay with the families, we then usually take our students to a major city for 4 days where we organize a rich cultural program. I have done this myself many times, so we wouldn't need any help for this part. The contrasts give our students an enriching mix of impressions from small town to mega-city, from everyday life to the extra-ordinary, from the down-home American to the multi-cultural urban experience.

Important facts:

Our **group size** is about 22-24 students. **Age:** 16 years.

Times:

We could host your students any time during the school year. Our school-year finishes on July 10th this year. Our Easter break lasts from March 27th to April 5th. During this week an exchange is not possible since many families go away during that time.

Our preferred travelling times would be after Easter (middle of April), but other times are possible if they are more convenient for you.

Another option:

In recent years, especially since the economic crisis has hit us all, it has become more difficult for partners in the US to finance such a visit to Europe. The primary worth of these exchange programs is nevertheless the interaction between like-aged students from different countries. If it is currently not feasible for students from your school to visit Graz, an interaction can still take place, for example through a joint project focussing on an interesting cross-curricular topic in which our students visit your students and, as a team, they all share their experiences and find solutions.

We are very open to other ideas to ensure that all students profit from the program.

Our students have always behaved very well during our previous exchange programs; all the schools and host families were thrilled to have them. In some cases long-term friendships have developed from these programs and students or even whole families have visited each other in the following years.

I have organized many exchange programs during the last __ years, many of them similar in structure, yet each uniquely adapted to the partner school. For the students on both sides, they have always been a real success. If you are interested in exploring the possibilities of such an exchange program and want to find out more about us or about previous programs, I invite you to take a look at our school homepage (www.gibs.at) and at the attached files containing details of previous programs.

Sincerely,

Dr. Elisabeth Poelzleitner