

LIVING THE GLOBAL LIFE

International Students Overcome Language and Cultural Barriers While Adjusting to Life in the U.S.

A loud, blaring alarm shrieks through the dark bedroom. A brand-new backpack is packed with school supplies and a new outfit is laid out on the bed. A crumpled schedule lies on the desk and the blinking red digits on the alarm clock read 6:30 a.m.

The first day of school is nerve-racking for many students who have lived in the same town and gone to the same schools their entire lives. However, students who moved into the district from other countries faced an entirely new, intense layer of first-day jitters. For **Stefania Oganezova (9)**, who moved from Russia in January of 2023, one of the hardest parts of adjusting to the U.S. was the new culture.

"Due to the difference in the mentality, it was hard for me to become friends with people at first because I didn't understand the way they acted," Oganezova said.

Another student who faced struggles adjusting to a new country was **Jean Abolio Barrios (9)**. Barrios,

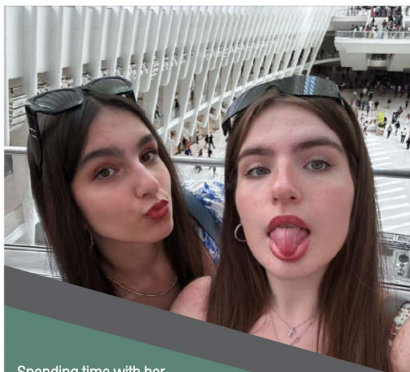
who was originally from Venezuela, had a positive experience overall but faced a big challenge in overcoming the communication barrier.

"It was pretty rough because of the different language," Barrios said. "I didn't know anything about the language, and I've never been to a country like the U.S."

Adjusting to a new culture and country would represent an immense obstacle for the majority of people, but for a select few, moving internationally was a smoother experience. One of those people was **Ivan Aguilar Zuniga (11)**, who had an uncomplicated experience adapting to the U.S. from Mexico.

"It was really cool, simple and easy," Aguilar Zuniga said. "I didn't have any trouble adjusting. The hardest part was making friends, but that got really easy."

Each of these students faced obstacles throughout their experience moving to the U.S. However, finding belonging in a new environment was a theme that they all shared.



Spending time with her sister, **Stefania Oganezova (9)** visits New York City during a vacation in June of 2024. Oganezova grew up in Moscow, Russia, and moved to the U.S. in 2022. Oganezova's entire family did not move with her, and her dad and two of her sisters still lived in Russia. "(Living away from my family) feels really sad, and I'm often homesick but, because I go back home a lot, it's almost normal," Oganezova said.



For many people, college is hard to pay for, leading to debt and financial struggles after graduation. However, athletes **Sadie Walsh (11)** and **Sydney Hastings (12)** received scholarships to play DI sports. Walsh's club coach reached out to The University of Toledo's soccer program to negotiate Walsh's athletic and academic scholarships, covering 75-80% of her college education.

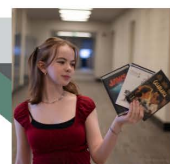
"It's definitely very calming. I think it's a relief knowing what I'm going to do in two years, so I'm not stressing about it. I'm also very excited to attend Toledo," **Sadie Walsh**

Hastings also received an athletic scholarship for softball from the University of Michigan. She received 50% of her tuition and was told the scholarship could increase depending on her performance.

"It was a big dream of mine to play softball in general," Hastings said. "The scholarship was something that was really special that ended up happening."

FOR THE BREAD

Athletes Receive DI College Scholarships



Anika Lindstrom (11)

"You get free movies. I have an absurd movie knowledge. I feel like I could rattle off all the run times of any movie that's in there right now."

Gabriel Romero (11)

"The hours are flexible because they let you create your own schedule so, if I have something come up, it's easy to get out of it."



HOME AWAY FROM HOME: Pointing towards Mexico, their home country, **Fernando Aguilar Zuniga (10)** and **Ivan Aguilar Zuniga (11)** recall their immigration journey before settling in Michigan. To make it to the U.S., the brothers rode in their car for 26 hours during the summer of 2024. They started in Texas and stopped in Ohio before landing in Michigan. Fernando found problems with their new home. "Leaving my friends from Mexico was pretty hard, but I know I can make more friends here," Fernando said.

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01. STIRRING UP FLAVOR Grinning **WARM, Isabella Fernandez (12)** embraces an important adult in her life, El tutor, **Mrs. Mariel Castro-Vaides**. Fernandez moved to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic two years ago. When she first arrived, she did not speak much English. Throughout this time in Fernandez's life, Castro-Vaides and **Mrs. Tana Hermosillo Huyck** were her mentors. "When I came here, (Mrs. Castro-Vaides and Mrs. Huyck) helped me with the language," Fernandez said. "They taught me how this country worked and helped me with school and studies." © Courtesy of ISABELLA FERNANDEZ (10)

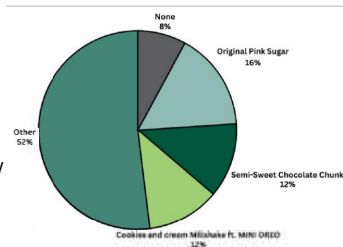
02. TEAM OF POSSIBILITIES During the basketball game on Dec. 20, **Arcken Jay De Chavez (9)** goes in for a layup against John Glenn's freshman team. After moving to the U.S. from the Philippines to be with his mom, De Chavez had only been in the U.S. for two years. When he first got here, De Chavez felt homesick, but the feeling went away when he started school and found a new group of friends through his basketball team. "It's a good school for me," De Chavez said. "There (are) a lot of things that you can do like sports." © K. SMITH

THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBL'S



Blue Monster ft. Chips Ahoy
"I really like the frosting, and I thought that the mini Chips Ahoy on it made it really fun."

Louis Goethals (12)



24 STUDENTS DISH ON THEIR FAVORITE CRUMBL COOKIE

The Original Pink Sugar
"I haven't had much Crumbl, but I like the dough and the frosting."

Alice Young (10)



EMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES

The Best and the Worst of Working at the Local Theater



Holly Peavler (11)

"I'm so sick of the smell of popcorn. It's hard for me to be in a room when someone is making popcorn."