CHINESE STUDENTS LIFE

ACADEMIC LIFE
Academic success is the highest priority for Chinese youth. To honor their families and schools, students experience high parent and teacher expectations and pressures to succeed in major school examinations. Students go to school from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. five days per week, in addition to full-day classes on weekends for test preparation. There may be longer hours if they attend a boarding school. They will push themselves to go to school every day, regardless of their health. With over 2000 students in one school, there is intense competition to receive the top grades specifically for college admission, which is their ultimate goal.

Schools rarely include non-academic events, such as dances and athletic games. Physical education is usually only 2-3 days per week. In regards to dress code, make-up and exposed shoulders are unacceptable in schools. Relationships are also not allowed in school. Although they crave to have fun, they feel guilty if they are not studying.

CLASS PARTICIPATION AND HOMEWORK
Students are graded by major state exams, not by written homework or class participation. They may not understand the concept of written homework and quizzes. Classes are taught in a very passive learning environment with classroom sizes of 45-50 students. Students rarely have the opportunity to speak in class. The teacher speaks, and the students listen and take notes.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES
One of the major struggles for Chinese students is English. Because other subjects are higher priority in schools, their English speaking ability is very limited. Students study English grammar in books, but they rarely speak aloud in English. They also don’t have many opportunities to speak with native English speakers. Teachers provide tapes for students to listen to the pronunciation, but usually in British English. When they arrive in the States, it may be difficult to understand the American accent. Because they are not comfortable speaking in English, they may not speak up due to fear of embarrassment.
ONE-CHILD POLICY / ROLE IN THE HOUSEHOLD
China’s population-control policy restricts families to one-child per urban household. Children are given more choices and are often spoiled by their parents. Because their schools are strict with rules, students expect more freedom when they return home. **Parents emphasize the importance of education, which is why children are generally not expected to do household chores.** It is best that you explain the importance of sharing household chores, and also clearly show them how to do the chores. Young people and parents do not spend a lot of time together. After dinner, they usually study further in their bedrooms, which include their own desk.

FAMILY LIFE
The Chinese family is considered more important than the individual, and people are very loyal to their families. Children understand that when they are older, their duty is to take care of their elders. **Parents depend on their child’s future.** Children are not raised to be independent from their parents, as family is everything. The Chinese are very respectful of their elders.

LIVING SITUATION
Most Chinese youth from the cities live in apartments, and have their own rooms. However, they usually share their home with their mom, dad and, most likely, extended family members. There is often street noise and light in the house throughout the night. In quiet neighborhoods, students may feel scared in a large house at night.

American bathrooms and kitchens are very different compared to their homes in China. Some student may not be used to the layout of American bathrooms. Students will need to be taught to **keep the shower curtain inside the bathtub.** Chinese students are also not used to American kitchens with the myriad choices of different appliances. It might be good to show them **how to use and what not to do with kitchen gadgets.**

CONFRONTATION / MODESTY
When students have problems in their lives, they most likely **will not complain** or express it to their host family because they don’t want to offend the host family. In addition, they may also fear **embarrassment,** also referred to as “losing face.” This term is used when losing his or her temper in public, acting in an arrogant manner, embarrassing someone by putting them on the spot, or failing to show appropriate respect. **To directly confront a person means to show disrespect,** which may be misunderstood for the student telling a lie. It is important that you address this issue and explain that open communication is key to living together.

The Chinese are very modest with their accomplishments. To brag and boast about their accomplishments is seen to be inconsiderate and rude. **It may seem that students do not want to share their lives, but they fear being disrespectful.**
**EYE CONTACT / GREETINGS**
It is considered disrespectful to stare into another person's eyes when speaking with them, so you may see that they will look towards the ground.

Chinese people do not hug each other when greeting someone. However, we have had wonderful stories of Chinese students feeling comfortable with hugs as they get to know the family.

**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GIRLS AND BOYS**
Female/male friendships are rare. It is common for boys to show affection towards other boys, and for girls to show affection towards other girls, such as holding hands and linking arms. It is taboo to have physical contact with another person of the opposite sex. Chinese students are very traditional in this sense. Schools also prohibit romantic relationships, which makes them very naive when compared to American students.

**UNIQUE CHINESE FOODS**
The Chinese take a lot of pride in their food. Many Chinese eat fresh foods from local street markets, and families prepare fresh foods of rice or noodles, and a staple dish. Processed, microwaveable and fast food is not common, although there are some American chains in the larger cities of China. They feel that they are unhealthy and cause a lot of health problems. The Chinese are also not used to eating cheese, butter and large amounts of meat.

**POLITICS and TABOO TOPICS**
The Chinese are very proud of their country and its political system, and they find it very offensive to offend the Communist system. The Chinese are also very sensitive about their limitations of free speech on political issues, such as Tibet, Falun Gung and the One-Child Policy. It is not fair to assume that mainland Chinese, Taiwanese and Hong Kong citizens are all the same. Chinese students may not be accepting of Japanese people due to the historical account of mass killings and rape of 1937. We hope that this experience will open their eyes to accept people for who they are, not based on historical and political tensions.

**MAJOR HOLIDAYS IN CHINA**
Students may feel homesick during national holidays, which are usually spent with family. You might want to ask them to share their festivals with you.
Lunar New Year (Spring Festival): end of January/beginning of February (Lunar New Year)
Chinese National Week: October 1
Mid-Autumn Festival (Moon Festival): August 15th

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**
http://www.whatkidscan.do.org/China_site/index.html
http://china-corner.com/
http://www.chinatownconnection.com/chinese_culture_articles.html