

Notes for Competitive Voice Options for Exchange Students

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Cell Phones for use in the States

OK, most kids last year, and now this year, arrive with phones. The good thing is that most of their phones are “open” and can be used with US carriers like Verizon, AT&T, etc.

First, the student will not want to purchase a phone from most of the carriers unless they are sure it is an “open” phone that they could use back home. Phones that are bought at the Apple store are open and will work with U.S. as well as foreign carriers.

Many things are changing in the wireless programs, so the best bet is to contact your carrier of choice, and ask questions.

AT&T still has competitive plans for pay-as-you-go plans with \$30 / month for unlimited talk and text. \$45 (40 with auto-refill) will get 1.5GB of data, and unlimited text and voice.

<http://www.att.com/shop/wireless/plans/prepaidplans.html>

Note that most smart phones can use WiFi, so the data option may not be needed if the student wants to save a few dollars. Last year I had one student with data and the other just used WiFi.

Depending on your plan, they may allow a phone to be added for an incremental amount per month and NOT have the normal 2 year contract. This is where you want to check with them to verify what your plan offers and allows for.

Most carriers will provide the SIM card at no or minimal charge if the student has their own phone.

Another competitive option for a new phone and pay-as-you-go is the Walmart StraightTalk offering. The Walmart web site had some basic phones for voice and texting for under \$30. Data plans start at \$45 / month. They charge \$0.99 for most SIM cards.

<https://www.straighttalk.com/wps/portal/home>

Sprint also has pre-paid plans that seem competitive as noted below:

<https://prepaid.sprint.com/#!/plans/>

I hope this helps. If you find any additional info, or trip over anything good, let me know,

fyi and thank you,

Steve