

Dear Travel Pal Caretaker,

Last year, I had an exciting idea about how to teach my students US Geography! I wanted to send several stuffed animals, or "Travel Pals" back and forth across the US and have people like you, communicate back to my class and contribute to the Travel Pal's scrapbook about your home and state. I believe that my students would be making real life connections through their Travel Pal and at the same time learn about important places, sites and interesting information from around the USA!

Almost 100% of my students live below poverty level and may never have an opportunity to travel and see our great country. I am hoping that this project will leave a lasting impression on them and influence them in ways I can't even imagine.

My students have worked hard on their group scrapbooks and are looking forward to learning about where their Travel Pal visits! My student's work will continue throughout the school year. They will be researching on the Internet, creating travel brochures, composing thank you letters, writing in their Travel Pal Interactive Notebook, creating fiction and non-fiction books, enhancing their map skills, illustrating famous sites, designing posters about different states and so much more!

Thank you again for participating. I hope you have as much fun being a part of this project as we have had creating it!

Sincerely,

Ms. Atkinson and her class 2007-2008

Contact information: Include email, phone & address!

THINGS WE NEED FOR YOU TO DO

Email us when the Travel Pal arrives to you safe and sound at metz.travelpals@yahoo.com. Even though I might know where the pals are headed, I want my students to be able to keep track as well. In this first email, please be sure to put an address where we can send you thank you notes/letters. You can address the email to your particular Travel Pal group or to our class. Please email us when the Travel Pal leaves you so we know when our pal is en route to its new caretaker. Also, please keep the pal for only 1-1/2 to 2 weeks so we can get it to as many states as possible!

Create a scrapbook page: feel free to use a couple of the pages we provided.

- use the markers, glue etc. we provided
- add photos of you and your family/class etc.
- be as creative as you would like

Feel free to **take up to 5 photos on the disposable camera** we sent. Take photos of you and the Travel Pal and/or the Travel Pal at special places or doing things. If camera 1 becomes full on your visit, we would appreciate if you could mail it back to us for developing and enjoyment!

Add some newspaper clippings from the city/town you live. You can insert them in the clear sheet protectors we have provided. Feel free to use other sources you might have.

Email us a few times about what you and the Travel Pal have been "doing."

You can create little vignettes about your own personal memories/ favorite places as well as integrating famous/historical information. If possible, I would like to have my students research some of the people/ places and things you write about, on the Internet. So keep this in mind when writing these emails so you can mention important places & events! The email can be as elaborate or as simple as you want. We will be checking our email site everyday as a part of the ongoing project! If you can think of a question to end your email with, that would give my students wonderful ideas for discussion and response.

Here are some email examples:

"I took Smooch to Cafe du Monde in the French Quarter to have beignets. A beignet is a small square fluffy doughnut covered in powdered sugar. Smooch had chocolate milk with his. The cafe is outside, and in between bites of beignets, Smooch snagged a few flies! We both had powdered sugar all over our faces! Are there any special pastries that are made in Austin?"

"Pinky and I watched the huge barges on the Mississippi River today. Do you have a large river in Austin?"

"Moo and I went to the ballet this weekend. We saw The Nutcracker. This is a show about a little girl who is transported to a magical land with talking animals and princesses. Do you know if there is a ballet in Austin?"

OTHER FUN SUGGESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER
(but these are not required)!

Add some memorabilia to the Travel Pals bag. Once the pals come back to us in April, the kids will be able to look at everything in the scrapbook and check out what their caretakers gave them to remember them by. I don't have any suggestions for you on this part. I figure that this is just something that will be 100% from you. I did not put this under the "required" part, but I am hoping everyone will think of something, because I think this will make the Travel pals homecoming very special for my students.

Email us photos from your own digital camera if you have one! I know this would take some effort, but my students would absolutely love this instant connection, and to be able to see their beloved Travel Pal with a friendly face would mean the world to them.

Send us a postcard from you city/state. I have added some postcard stamps for you to use. At our school, we will have a huge hallway display showing a map of the US, Travel Pal pictures and more. I am hoping to get some postcards to add to this, and print out some of your emails and photos to display as well. This way the whole school gets to learn from this project, not just the students in my class.

Write a diary of the Travel Pals stay with you. The more embellish, the better, remember you are writing for 6 & 7 year olds! Write about every day things (going to work; where is that, what do you do OR about your school and class activities) and exciting adventures. Such as a playing at the park or visiting a local carnival.

AT THE END OF THE TRAVEL PALS VISIT

You have 2 options for passing the Travel Pal on.

#1: You can send the pal to someone you know who lives in a different state. Remember, we are trying to cover as many of the 50 states as possible! If you have

a questions as to what states we have visited, just email me and I will let you know metz.travelpals@yahoo.com.

#2: You can email me that you are ready to send them on and I will email you an address of someone I know who has already told me they want to participate.

If you are one of the last persons to receive the Travel Pal in late March or early April. PLEASE email me no matter what before you send it on, because we may need to have you send it back to the school to us, or we might be able to have you send it on to one more place!

Please feel free to use some of the stamps I have enclosed to mail the Travel Pal to its next destination. I know that I probably did not send enough stamps for all the mailings it will go through, so when we run out, email me and I can send more stamps to you or reimburse you for postage