

## Newton North High School and IES Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente: A brotherhood story



### 1. Our history

It was back in the 1980's when we started our story of student exchanges with Newton North HS, three weeks in Massachusetts and three weeks in Burgos, every other year. Back then our 24 students and 2 teachers got hospitality within American families living in Newton. At the time, students were attending to lessons full time every day, it was a unique opportunity for language immersion and a big effort from everyone. All arrangements were done through the postal service, it took 7 to 9 days for a letter to cross the Atlantic Ocean and very expensive phone calls were left for real emergencies.

Some of our students have kept the relationship with their American families for more than 20 years and visited as wanted.

Supported from scratch by the Education Council of Castilla y León and former principal Mr. Eusebio Miguel López García, the project was taken over by principals Demetrio Hernández Sánchez y Maria Álvarez Dominguez, in the last five years. Meanwhile different heads of the Department of English participated: Pilar Gómez, Ramón Barriuso, Teresa Serranos, Jesús Pavón and Ana Merino with the cooperation of several teachers.

### 2. Newton North High School

Newton is a suburb located 9,3 miles/15 km west away from Boston, with a metro line and a commuter train that run on irregular bases but still helpful.

Newton North HS is a prestigious public high school, one of the best in New England, with 2100 students and about 200 teachers. Their graduates are enrolled in colleges of the country and in the very well known of Massachusetts: Harvard University, Boston University, Berkley School of Music, Massachusetts Institute of Technology among others.



We have been pleasantly impressed by the school facilities and the motivational decoration, the indoor running track, indoor swimming pool, all different kinds of outdoor sport fields and a gorgeous theatre-auditorium for 500 people, along with professional workshops as graphic arts, cooking or electronics, two cafeterias- canteen and the international café room that was reserved for the use of the Spanish exchange party.





### 3. The Project: developing competencies, skills and knowledge

Our students prepared in groups of three, oral presentations on eight different subjects about culture and history linked to the places visited in Boston and New York City:

- 1- The Freedom Trail
- 2- USA: The country made up of 50 states
- 3- American Educative System -General Overview -Newton North High School - Harvard -MIT.
- 4- Segregation-Brief overview-Abraham Lincoln and the End of Slavery-The Underground Railroad (Jackson Homestead)-Civil Rights Movement (Rosa Parks & Martin Luther King) -Current Situation
- 5- Sport in the USA -Sports in Education -Boston Top Teams: NBA: The Boston Celtics –Baseball: The Red Socks -American football: The New England Patriots
- 6- New York: An example of the American Dream-Historical Overview-The Statue of Liberty & Ellis Island (Two landmarks for Immigrants)-American Financial District (Wall Street)-9/11 Causes and Consequences The United Nations: (History; Members, The General Assembly &The Security Council...)
- 7- New York: Architecture and design: Top 10 buildings - Manhattan Street map
- 8- 9/11 Terrorist Attack. Ground Zero



#### 4. The Exchange: Newton & Boston

As Newton is so close to Boston, we had the opportunity to take the commuter train to South Station in several school trips: Freedom Trail, Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of Science (MOS), The Boston Tea Party, Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) were visited



as well as the Public Garden, Boston Common, the stadiums, harbour, waterfront. Beacon Hill, Acorn Street and the always entertaining Quincy Market.



**Freedom Trail**





## MIT & Harvard

Cambridge was also within our agenda, we walked around Harvard Square and University and enjoyed the interesting design of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the afternoon, as we had a view over Charles River.



A little humble spot in Newton, the Jackson Homestead, a helping site on the underground railroad helped us to understand the black slave's difficult path to freedom and civil rights.

After a farewell full of hugs, kisses and tears, we took the commuter and the bus to 32 St & 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. Manhattan and walked with our suitcases to 48<sup>th</sup> St where Holiday Inn Hotel was waiting for us with a nice cup of coffee and a cool space for lunch.

## 5. The trip: Manhattan Island



1\$ pizza

The following four days in Manhattan Island were full of excitement and surprises from 8 am to 11 pm. **Our first afternoon**, we walked around Grand Central Library as well as Grand Central Station and got to the top of the Empire State Building, an iconic visit, some more walking, to end up at High Line Park, a great spot to enjoy the view in the evening.





**On Thursday**, we arrived in the Natural History Museum, impressive but outdated, afterwards walked across Central Park where we could not have the projected picnic as it was raining, stopped for lunch and some rest and went to our guided tour at United Nations, greatest visit ever.

## United Nations





## Korea Town

The evening was dark and rainy, but we all decided to keep on the agenda and took the funicular to Roosevelt Island, then the ferry to 34 St to be impacted by East Manhattan skyline. Still, we ended up dining at K Town some Korean speciality, a gastronomic experience.





**Liberty Island**



**Friday** appeared sunny and delightful, great, as our plan was the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island where we got into the Museum of Immigration another big piece in the American history puzzle.

In the afternoon from Battery Park to Ground Zero where we lived the memory of the 9/11 terrorist attack to the World Trade Centre- Twin towers space turned into two immense fountains that show a scar full of beauty.



**Ground Zero**

A needed healthy meal was offered at Whole Foods, quite convenient and got our way to Chinatown, very alive and colourful where everything was advertised in Chinese.



**Brooklyn Bridge**

Ahead we had the night to enjoy, and Brooklyn Bridge was our twilight experience as we walked the wood deck all the way to DUMBO where we took a picture at the super trendy street under the Manhattan Bridge and hang out and rested in a penthouse under the awesome skyline of Financial District from Brooklyn.

**Saturday**, we had to leave everything packed and explored midtown Times Square area, climbed to Rockefeller Centre and enjoyed the street market, shops and food.

At five o'clock, a fleet bus took us to the airport and the Newton Exchange got to the end after having a flavour of the pain and glory of the traveller: lots of miles on our backs, sometimes thirsty, some others hungry, aches here and there, but exciting experiences, dramatic views, new friendships and love for everyone in a way that our eyes and hearts became open to the world, therefore the exchange turns into a before and after life experience.





## 6. The legacy

We witness how the evolution of our project has been notorious, related to new communication media that helped us moving into very interesting activities whereas it is much more than a cultural trip or a language immersion; the human relationship established among students and their families build bridges of interaction,

possibilities and understanding to work together for a better future

By Ms Ana Merino and Ms Ana Domingo

## 7. Some thoughts from our students

"I think this is one of the best experiences I have ever had. I have met a lot of new fantastic people and I have visited new places that I have never expected to visit. The best thing of the exchange is the new people from different places you meet. They were such fantastic people that I would never forget them. The host family was amazingly kind, and you feel like if you were one of them every time. I would recommend this experience to everyone who would like to meet new people and would like to visit the USA"

Mario P.

"I think I have gained a lot from this experience, lots of new friends and a beautiful host-family. My English has improved since I went to Boston and the place where we stayed was a quiet, amazing and pretty suburb. The people there are very nice and kind, although there are always exceptions. Anyway, the experience is fantastic, and it is worth it all! "

Esther O.

"It has been a unique experience in which I have improved my level of English, I have met many people and I have learned different cultures. The family I've been with has treated me very well and we have become very fond of each other. They have done everything possible to make it an unforgettable experience. I have seen incredible places and I have experienced movie situations that I never thought I would experience. The farewell was very sad, and I really want to see them again in February."

Olga S.

"I've lived an unforgettable experience; I've laughed and enjoyed every little moment. My exchange family was amazing, and I did a lot of different plans with them. The farewell was sad, but we had many desires to visit New York.

Being in New York is like a dream, it's a city that transmits you good vibes, what I have clear is that I want to return!!!!"

Elena M.

"I think this is a unique and unforgettable experience. It has been three incredible weeks. I have been very happy and lucky for the family; I love them very much. It couldn't have been better. I have really liked living American life and seeing how things are there. I have done many things in Boston. I have met people, I have learned more English, discovered new things, try other foods, I have visited many places, I laughed a lot and I have had a great with my friends and my host-family. Thanks to the teachers for organizing this trip. I really want them to come in February and I hope to be able to return to America another year."

Ángela P.

