

Stepping into his new apartment off Mission Road, then-freshman Daniel Hansen took in his surroundings. After the 12 hour flight from Copenhagen to Kansas City, Hansen didn't mind the small space or having to sleep in the living room. He didn't mind not knowing anyone at his new school or only having been to the United States a couple times before on vacations.

Now-senior Hansen wasn't a stranger to moving. He'd been travelling to new places for as long as he could remember. Born in Japan, moved to Panama, then to Mexico, off to Denmark and finally landing in Kansas. His dad worked for a Danish shipping company, Maersk, which required their family to pick up their lives and move whenever his job required.

"I've always been pretty good at getting up, dropping everything and then going to a different place and starting over," Hansen said.

Attending international schools and experiencing new cultures had opened Hansen up to the world. He went to schools with people of different nationalities and had learned to speak three languages. Rather than years of conjuguemos and google translate, Hansen had gained first-hand experience and could speak English, Danish and Spanish.

Hansen lived in Mexico for six years, and was able to connect with the people and culture more there than anywhere else. Even when his family moved again, Hansen carried the culture with him. The smell of tacos and fajitas carried through his house frequently.

"You'll notice that people all have different things about them and if you go to a different country then there's even more to know about them," Hansen said. "You just get very sensitive to noticing those differences in people, how they behave, how they speak, how they make friends."

But going into his freshman year, Hansen was facing something he had never seen before – American public high school.

The Link Leader activities on the first day of school helped Hansen become accustomed to his new school. He bonded with an upperclassman and was able to see someone he knew in the halls, someone who helped him find where his next class was.

"I noticed pretty much the first day here that everybody else had someone that they knew from middle school," Hansen said. "I just didn't know anyone at all. It did take a few days for me to find a group that I hung out with."

Even though Hansen made friends relatively quickly, he didn't truly find his niche until the IB program his junior year. Hansen was able to form closer bonds with the students he had every class with, where nobody was divided into separate groups. He also had access to a program that would make it easier for him to choose if he wanted to move back to Europe after graduation.

Even though Mexico was his home for the longest, Hansen had more ties to Denmark than anywhere else. He was a Danish citizen through his parents, and would be able to go to school in Denmark for much cheaper than he would in America.

"I could live in Denmark where most of my family is and have a support system," Hansen said. "But if I went to university in some sort of U.S. state where none of my family is, then I'd have to rely on myself."

Hansen decided that Denmark would be the best place for him. He could skip the general courses of American colleges and go straight to the classes that would help him in his

chosen field, data science. While most students wouldn't have the opportunities to study abroad before college, Hansen was already prepared.

Instead of working a summer job, trying to save money for college, Hansen would move back to Denmark and take a gap year in order to try different career paths through internships.

"When I decided to take my gap year, I still wasn't sure what I really wanted to be doing with my degree," Hansen said. "Now I'm more interested in data science, but I'm still going to be taking that gap year in order to narrow it down and make sure that's what I want to do."

Constantly travelling and meeting new people as a child prepared Hansen for his move, and to leave the life he'd built in America.

Although it had been more difficult for him to keep friendships or settle down than the average child, Hansen wouldn't change his life if he had the chance. He wouldn't change the different schools, people he got to meet or cultures experienced.

"I do sometimes wish I had stayed in one school for a longer period of time in order to have built deeper friendships," Hansen said. "But overall, I'm pretty happy with having been able to experience so many different countries and cultures."