

Liaison Teacher Guidelines

Student Exchange Programs

Welcome liaison teachers! Whether you are new to the program or a seasoned veteran, this document will provide you with information you need to successfully manage an Alberta Education student exchange program at your school.

What is your role?

Liaison teachers are essential to the success of the Student Exchange Programs. They:



- promote the exchange programs;
- screen Alberta student applicants and their families;
- coordinate with school administrators and guidance counsellors to ensure inbound exchange students are admitted and registered;
- assist Alberta students with their timetable planning; and
- support inbound exchange students as they transition to life in Alberta.

Before the Exchange

Promoting the Student Exchange Programs

Promotion of the exchange programs is most often aimed at Grade 10 students, who can then participate in the program in Grade 11. Participation in Grade 12 may be arranged for students who are able to plan for a two-month absence.

Start promoting early!

- The earlier students find out about the exchange programs, the better. This allows students to properly arrange their timetable and to ensure they have the required language competency. This also discourages last minute applications, which are difficult to administer.
- Promote exchange programs during the first week of classes in September and at the beginning of the second semester in early February.

- You may even want to present the possibility of exchanges to Grade 9 students during their high school orientation day. Hopefully, when they return as Grade 10 students, they will already be excited about the program and eager to apply.

Get help!

- Form a committee of German, Japanese, Spanish and French language teachers (where applicable) and give each member a promotional task. While the languages and exchange destinations vary, the motivations to participate in the program are the same (to increase second language competency and gain an intercultural experience).
- Ensure that your school's guidance counsellors are aware of the program and mention it to students that enroll in language classes.
- Ensure that your administrators are aware of the exchange programs. You may need their approval for some of the promotional activities listed below.

Spread the word!

To spread awareness of the exchange programs beyond your classroom:



- Ask past participants to present their personal experience to your Grade 10 language classes or write an account of their exchange in the school or community newspaper. If your school is currently hosting an exchange student or international student from Germany, Japan, Mexico, Spain or Quebec, involve them too.
- Discuss the exchange programs at staff and departmental meetings;
- Circulate promotional materials throughout the school, including to relevant student clubs.
- Promote the exchange programs in the school newspaper.

- Promote the exchange programs on your school website and link it to Alberta Education's student exchange site.
- Hold an information session about the exchange programs for students at lunch time or after school.
- Make a display of the exchange destinations on a bulletin board in your school.
- Arrange for a page in the school yearbook to be devoted to the exchange programs.

Application Process

When Alberta Education notifies students of the matching results, the Alberta liaison teacher will receive copies of the proposed match and any notification for unsuccessful candidates.



During this stage, Alberta liaison teachers can:

- help the Alberta student correspond with their exchange student partner and family;
- communicate immediately with Alberta Education's International Exchange Coordinator regarding any changes made to the Alberta student's personal information;
- assist the Alberta student and family in planning the exchange year's timetable/coursework;
- ensure that school administrators and guidance counsellors are aware of the students' participation; and
- advise unsuccessful applicants about alternative study abroad opportunities.

During the Exchange

Alberta students

Hosting semester

During this semester, Alberta students can take a relatively normal course load, including core courses. However, they should not overload their schedule with core courses since they will have some hosting responsibilities at home. If they have not already done so, students should take their 20-level language during this semester.*

*Students going to Japan should have completed Japanese 20 before they depart for Japan in August

and should not complete the requirement during the hosting semester.

Semester away

Students should select courses for their away semester on the basis of their aptitude in that subject area; doing this will help them work ahead and finish these courses before departure. **Students should not take all their coursework with them to their exchange destination as they will be responsible for a full course load at their host school.**

The following is a list of recommended courses:

- The 30-level of the second language (ie, German 30, Japanese 30, Spanish 30 or French 30). Students may challenge the 30-level exam when they return from the exchange.
- Social studies 20 or any other course in which the subject matter is not sequential.
- Electives, such as physical education, art, music and so on.
- Special projects or cooperative education courses (Liaison teachers may help the student design a for-credit special project related to their exchange experience. School administration will need to approve the project proposal).

Other programming hints

- It is not wise to enroll students in any 30-level (academic) courses, other than a 30-level language during the semester that they will be away.
- If the course they require is non-semestered (or year round), a reliable friend may collect notes and handouts for them in each class during their absence.
- If the student requires courses or credits, they may:
 - attend summer school the year before or after the exchange; or
 - extend their high school stay for one semester; or
 - enroll in distance learning (correspondence) courses before or after (not during) their stay abroad.

The main goal of the exchange programs is language learning in a cultural milieu, which will require the student's full attention. Taking any school work from Alberta with them to their exchange destination will distract them greatly from achieving this goal. Only if absolutely necessary, may the course work for one Alberta course be permitted.



Exchange students

With the exception of the Japanese program, exchange students usually arrive in Alberta in August or September and leave in October (Spain), November (Germany), December (Quebec) or January (Mexico). During this hosting period, liaison teachers play a critical support role for the exchange student. They are responsible to:

- remind all staff of the arrival of the exchange student;
- arrange for the exchange student to be registered;
- remind school administration that *basic school fees are waived for exchange students*. (The host family is expected to pay the transportation fees for the exchange student. Exchange students are expected to pay fees associated with extracurricular activities or specialty courses.)
- arrange appointments with the guidance department for course selection;
- welcome the exchange student and introduce them to the school routine;
- assist with course selection;
- meet with the exchange students' chaperone and give them a tour of the school (if applicable); and
- maintain close contact with both students during the first month – this is usually when difficulties arise.

Planning the exchange student's timetable

While in Alberta, the exchange student is expected to carry a full Alberta school program. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- electives such as industrial arts, art or music give students the opportunity to meet and communicate with other students in a less structured atmosphere;

- drama and physical education often provide exchange students with excellent socializing and language learning situations; and
- most inbound exchange students are often excellent students and have a good English language proficiency. As such, they may be enrolled in English 20 and in Grade 11 or 12 math and science courses.

If difficulties arise

- If there is a dispute between the partner exchange students, sit down with each student separately to discuss the issue. It may stem from a cultural misunderstanding.
- Involve the host family if necessary.
- Inform Alberta Education's International Exchange Coordinator. If the problem cannot be resolved at the school level, the International Exchange Coordinator will address it.

After the Exchange

Alberta students who return from an exchange program often go through another adjustment process and require a great deal of support. Sometimes they feel as if they no longer fit into their Alberta social networks or are overwhelmed by the amount of work they need to do to make up for their time away.

To help students during this period, the liaison teacher can:

- remind them of coursework to complete and, if necessary, help them create a completion plan;
- invite them to discuss their experience with the appropriate senior-level language class;
- coordinate meetings with next year's successful candidates and have them present to them about their exchange experience.

Professional Development Opportunities

Alberta students participating in Alberta Education's Student Exchange Programs must be accompanied to and from their exchange destination by a chaperone, which can include a liaison teacher. Being a chaperone provides a great professional development opportunity to visit a school in the exchange destination, learn about another education system, and develop a learning network of educators in the field.

Accompanying students to their exchange destination

Chaperones are responsible to ensure that students arrive safely at their exchange destination and connect with their host families. Chaperones also visit students at their schools to ensure that they are adjusting to their new environment. Chaperones generally stay in the exchange destination for one week.

Accompanying students home

Chaperones are responsible to ensure that students arrive safely home from their exchange destination. Chaperones should expect to be away from school between three to five days.

Costs

Alberta Education pays for the flight and travel insurance of the chaperone. Additional costs, including accommodation, food and transportation are paid for by the chaperone. These costs will be reimbursed upon the submission of an expense claim form with original receipts. Costs will also be covered for a substitute teacher needed to fill in the position of the liaison teacher while they are away as a chaperone.



principal. After they have received approval from their principal, they may then contact the International Exchange Coordinator to express their interest.

Selection

Liaison teachers who are active in the Student Exchange Programs are generally selected as a chaperone. Liaison teachers who are interested in chaperoning should discuss the possibility with their