

MODEL SCHOOL POLICY

on

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE

Introduction

The Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET), in partnership with the secondary-school community, has developed the following document to assist American schools in the process of administering successful international student exchange programs. CSIET, a national non-profit foundation, is dedicated to promoting quality international youth exchanges that enrich local high school communities. The CSIET Model School Policy was developed with valuable input from individual high school administrators, exchange program managers, and national advocates for youth exchange. These suggested guiding principles will provide a foundation for local school policies and encourage every U.S. school to engage in international youth exchange programs.

Current events clearly show how much more interconnected all of us are to the whole world. This gives schools ever more impressive reasons for accepting international exchange students enthusiastically and using them as resources to broaden student and community perspectives on the world.

Youth exchanges provide foreign exchange students with an American experience, giving them a more balanced understanding of our country. They encourage new perspectives for the school's own students that open their minds to the world. More importantly, these 'connections' help teenagers on both sides of exchange grow and gain maturity.

The concept of exchange programs began more than half a century ago with the Fulbright-Hays Act. High-level officials have supported international student exchange every year since. These cross-cultural experiences offer unique opportunities for American schools to help their students and communities:

- Learn first-hand about other cultures and customs
- Create life-long friendships across cultures
- Gain new perspectives on our country and the world
- Begin to understand how tightly connected the peoples and countries of the world are to each other, something our world seriously needs
- Open young minds to the importance of understanding other languages and other cultures, particularly with respect to career and personal opportunities

At the same time, schools have a right to expect that international exchange students and student exchange programs to adhere to guidelines that will minimize problems and make success more likely. In all international exchange programming, the human dynamic may sometimes complicate matters for administrators. However, the critical element is the ongoing relationship between the exchange program and the school - as well as the responsiveness of the exchange program. Once this relationship is formed and articulated, problems can usually be managed effectively and ultimately resolved.

International exchange students offer an exciting resource. Many schools have created special events and programs to encourage all students to get to know these guests from other cultures and expand their own horizons and interests. Such efforts also help exchange students feel comfortable in an all-new life by taking

full advantage of their opportunities.

International youth exchange programs internationalize American high schools - one exchange at a time. Thank you for your support of these seminal programs. You are helping to mold our next generation of world leaders.

This Model School Policy on International Student Exchange has been endorsed by: National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP); National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and American Association of School Administrators (AASA).

MODEL SCHOOL POLICY ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE

NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE STUDENTS

American high schools should strive to accept international exchange students each year. The number of international exchange students that a high school will accept and the timing/deadlines for the process vary. These guidelines suggest a middle ground that recognizes the needs of schools and exchange programs, taking into account the increasing difficulty of securing early student applications and host family commitments. Ideally, schools should work toward a goal of 1% of the total student population being comprised of exchange students. Acknowledging that school conditions vary locally, it is important to set a personal goal that best fits each school community.

TIMING OF PLACEMENT PROCESS

- The school asks that organizations contact the school each year to indicate an interest in placing exchange students. Exchange organizations should provide schools with advance notice of their intent to place.
- The school is to be notified as soon as Student and Host Family match-ups are confirmed.
- Recognizing the timing of school staffing and resourcing, exchange organizations should submit Student and Host Family applications as early as possible or up to two weeks prior to the school's start date. However, acknowledging the difficulty of securing Host Family commitments, the school will try to accept applications until school starts. (Note: The U.S. State Department federal J-visa regulations permit the placement of exchange students up to August 31 of each year.)

SELECTING STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

- The school reserves the right to work with exchange organizations that have proved their commitment and responsiveness.
- The school will also be open to new organizations that demonstrate a serious commitment to the school and community.

SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM

All schools should reserve right of final approval on all student placements. Additionally, schools should require that each individual student exchange program must:

- Be listed in the most current CSIET Advisory List (for the current list visit www.csiet.org).
- Maintain a network of qualified and trained local representative living in or near the community, with responsibility for each student - and provide orientation and ongoing support for both the host family and student.
- Provide continuing hands-on monitoring and responsiveness - from local representative to national headquarters - including student selection and preparation, selection and screening of host families, ongoing contact with host family and student, and communication with the school and responsiveness to school needs.
- Receive school enrollment authorization for placements each year prior to contacting potential host families - and follow school policy on timing and requirements.
- Screen and prepare exchange students while monitoring their progress during the school year, responding to issues or problems as they develop.
- Arrange host family placements before exchange students leave their home country. Exchange students are expected to be in their host family and school placements by the first day of classes.
- Personally interview and screen all potential host families, matching student and family interests and personalities.
- Not knowingly place exchange students based on their athletic abilities.
- In the event that tutoring/ESL help is needed, the organization will make arrangements and ensure that the student accepts financial responsibility for it.
- Provide the school with a complete student application which includes the following:
 - personal letter from the student
 - detailed information on student and natural family
 - proof that the student has sufficient language ability to function in an American classroom
 - original transcript of student's high school grades, with English translation (and this must meet school requirements)
 - necessary medical history, including proof of immunization as required by the school district, any medical/physical restrictions and a recent physical exam with proof of required immunizations

SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS ON J-1 VISA SPONSORSHIPS

- Each exchange student must be qualified to participate in regular classes and maintain a typical schedule - this means an acceptable level of proficiency in the English language, a commitment to treat coursework as important, and the social skills to enjoy participation in social and extra-curricular activities.
- International exchange students must be aware that participating in interscholastic athletic teams means they must comply with district and state athletic eligibility regulations, and that many teams require try-outs.
- The school appreciates the difficulty of a student's plunge into a different language/culture/institution, but exchange students are expected to attain passing grades by the end of their first semester.
- Exchange students; enrollment eligibility will be for one-year only - exchange students and host families are expected to know and must follow all school policies and rules.
- Exchange students must have medical and accident insurance that meets or exceeds U.S. Department of State guidelines.
- Since there is wide variation of graduation policies in the United States, exchange students will understand that they are not guaranteed the ability to graduate or be granted diplomas.

SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Students on U.S. State Department-sponsored programs (J-1 visas) generally pay no tuition, but they are expected to pay all normal expenses, including standard course and extra-curricular activity fees. The school has no obligation to provide any special services, tutoring, supplies or equipment.
- International exchange students have all rights and privileges accorded to community students - EXCEPT the right to a diploma.
- The school will make every effort to integrate international exchange students into the school's social fabric. In turn, schools shall encourage international exchange students to participate enthusiastically in school activities, to make friends, to make a personal contribution to the school - and to help spread the word about their country and themselves, informally and by making presentations in classes and to community groups and talking to media when asked.

Created by high school and organization members of CSIET, Fall 2002. To review current CSIET Standards [click here](#). To review J-Visa federal regulations visit:

<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges/resources.htm>



CSIET:  212 S. Henry Street; Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone: 703/739-9050; Fax: 703/739-9035; Email: mailbox@csiet.org