

Chapter 9

Program Connections

International education is most powerful when programs and initiatives touch the entire school community and continually reinforce the importance of cultural sensitivity, intercultural competency, international awareness and global responsibility. Most school authorities begin the process of internationalization by implementing one program or initiative; however, usually their goal is to develop multifaceted and omnipresent programming that involves students, school authority staff and the broader community. Many believe that complete internationalization will only occur when international education goals are widely considered to be as important as traditional education goals; e.g., literacy and numeracy.

To assist school authorities in expanding international education programming, this chapter will highlight the various connections that can be made between international education programs, initiatives and activities. It assumes that at the base of all internationalization strategies, contained within each of the following programs, are connections to the Alberta programs of study and intercultural literacy.

What Programs and Initiatives Are Already in Place?

In Chapter 4: An Internationalization Strategy, school authorities are encouraged to conduct a survey of “international education activities that currently exist within the school community ...” to identify which individuals should be consulted about a possible internationalization strategy. Administrators planning to expand programming may wish to revisit the results of that survey or to conduct a new one, as it will identify areas of interest and highlight points of entry for future programming.

Knowing who is involved in international education helps administrators map out networks (international or otherwise) to assist them in developing, promoting, implementing and evaluating programs, initiatives and activities. For example, former

teacher exchange participants may initiate partnerships between their Alberta schools and their exchange schools; an effective English as a second language (ESL) program may not only support Alberta students but may also attract international students; and strong second language programming may motivate students to study abroad. Community resources, such as cultural clubs or immigration and settlement organizations, may also be able to provide expertise or assistance.

What Program Combinations Exist?

The following graphics illustrate the most common program connections. However, because all international education programs share a similar aim, they are all likely to interconnect in some way.

Beginning with Language Learning

Many school authorities began their journey of internationalization with language programming, which provides students with a tangible skill and naturally raises interest in the people who speak the language of study. It also brings teachers with international and/or intercultural experience into Alberta schools. Finally, because senior high school language programs receive credit unit enrollment (CEU) funding, they do not require school authorities to apply for grants, fundraise or otherwise independently finance the program. School authorities with existing language programs may consider the following expansion options.



1. Form partnerships between Alberta schools and schools located in countries that speak the language of study.
2. Encourage students studying a language to participate in an exchange to a part of the world where the language is spoken.

3. Encourage educators that teach a language to participate in an exchange to a part of the world where the language is spoken.
4. Leverage the skills and experience of staff and students who are engaged in language learning. As second language learners, these individuals can empathize with the language challenges that students face when studying in their non-native language. They may also be able to communicate with international students in their native language.

From Language Learning to International Partnerships and Student Exchanges

At Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School and Hunting Hills High School in Red Deer, enrollment in language and culture programs was beginning to dwindle. To generate more excitement and interest in language and culture programs, it was decided that all major international school trips would centre around the second languages taught in the school. Therefore, to participate in a school trip to China, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico or Spain, students had to complete (or be enrolled in) at least 10 credits of second language or immersion instruction. Twin school relationships were developed in each of the countries and individual and group exchanges followed.

The most successful of these partnerships has been between Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School and École Jeanne D'Arc in Mulhouse, France. Individual and group exchanges have taken place every year between these schools over the last 20 years. Nearly 1000 students have participated in the program since its inception in the early 1990s.

School partnerships, exchanges and international trips have proven to be an excellent vehicle to promote second language and immersion programs as well as internationalism in Red Deer public senior high schools.

– Rob Porkka, Director, International Education Services, Red Deer Public School District No. 104.

Beginning with an International Student Program

International student programs require an initial investment by school authorities. However, because they have the potential to become financially self-sufficient, they are attractive to school authorities that are beginning to internationalize. International student fees enable school authorities to enhance programming to benefit both international and domestic students. For example, enhanced ESL programming and support benefits both Alberta English language learners and international students. In addition, international student programs rely upon well-developed international relationships between Alberta school authorities and students, agent partners and/or ministries of education abroad. These relationships can expand beyond international student recruitment. Partners may elect to establish international school partnerships, cooperate on language programming or create mutually beneficial professional development activities. School authorities with existing international student programs may consider the following expansion options.

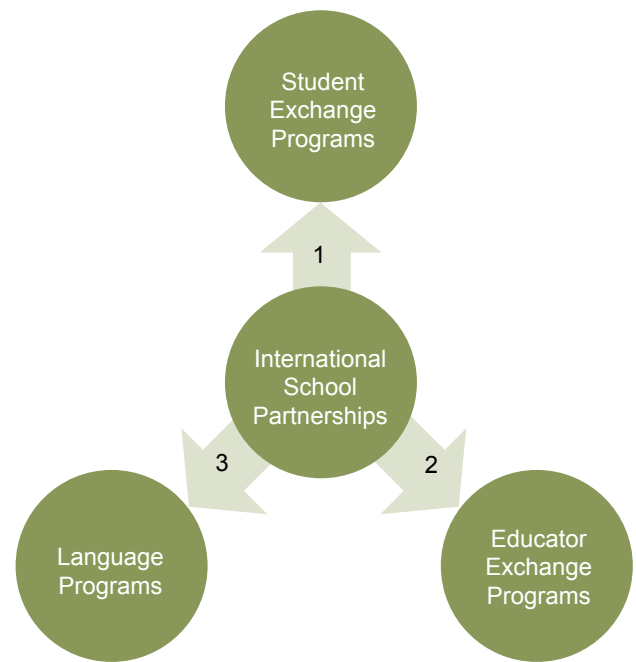


1. Encourage school authority representatives who are travelling overseas to recruit international students and to form relationships with individuals and organizations that may facilitate or support the establishment of school partnerships and language learning programs in the school authority.
2. Include ESL fees in international student fees; this funding will improve ESL support for all English language learners.

Beginning with School Partnerships

School partnerships are often organized by teachers and administrators who locate a partnership opportunity and then work with their partners to develop international learning opportunities for their students. School partnerships are a great way to establish relationships between schools because

- 1) they are relatively inexpensive compared to other international education programs; and
- 2) they allow for the gradual establishment of international relationships. Once solidified, these relationships may become a platform for additional programs and initiatives. Schools with existing partnerships may consider, and work with, their school authority to realize the following expansion options.



1. Expand existing partnership activities to include student exchanges.
2. Expand existing partnership activities to include educator exchanges.
3. Enhance school partnerships by offering the language spoken by the students at the partner school.

Soon after the International Education Program was established in our school authority, we were approached by a leader in the local Chinese community to consider establishing ties with the city of Wuhan in central China. An invitation to visit one school in Wuhan was soon reciprocated by a visit to one of our senior high schools and formed the basis of a school twinning partnership.

The school staff had a discussion about what activities they could engage in with their partner school and a Chinese Mandarin language program was suggested. A school survey indicated that there was enough interest to begin the program. With the support of the Chinese Language Advisor, we implemented the Chinese Mandarin Language and Culture program. Close to 20 students enrolled the first year.

We began our search for a teacher, and lo and behold, we were able to find someone who was originally from Wuhan and is now a certificated teacher in Edmonton! This teacher facilitated communication with the school in Wuhan and helped to organize the placement of one of our retired English teachers in Wuhan (to provide English tutorials) and a visit to the partner school by the group of students taking Chinese Mandarin!

– Emilie DeCorby, Principal, Edmonton Catholic Separate School District No. 7.

Beginning with an English as a Second Language Program

Many schools have or are introducing ESL support and programming to meet the needs of Alberta's increasingly diverse population. The lingual and intercultural skill set of ESL professionals may assist in developing other international education programs. For example, many international students choose to come to Canada to improve their English. School authorities with a high quality ESL program may, therefore, be positioned to market their school authority and its schools abroad. School authorities with an existing ESL program may consider the following expansion options.

1. Showcasing the school authority's strong ESL program may help the school authority attract international students. ESL teachers and domestic ESL students are able to empathize with and support international students who are learning English.
2. ESL teachers or domestic ESL students may know individuals, schools or organizations abroad that can facilitate international school partnerships.

Before inviting international students to come study in our school authority, it was important for us to have a comprehensive ESL program available. Because of the significant number of immigrants coming to Edmonton on an annual basis, strong ESL programming already existed at the senior high school level. It was important for our staff to recognize that, once enrolled, international students were to be welcomed as 'one of our own' and provided with the same supports that are available to all of our English language learners. International students and their parents tend to be very discerning of the programming provided. Our strong ESL program has repeatedly lived up to their expectations and helped us to attract international students to our school authority.

– Emilie DeCorby, Principal, Edmonton Catholic Separate School District No. 7.



Beginning with Student Exchanges

It is difficult to begin the process of internationalization with a school authority based student exchange program because successful student exchange programs require well-established and reliable international partnerships. However, some school authorities begin to internationalize by informing students about exchange programs and international learning opportunities that are available to them (see Chapter 11: Student Exchange Programs). Students who are participating in or have completed an exchange are effective champions for international learning, particularly amongst their peers. By sharing their experiences and perspectives, they generate curiosity about other parts of the world and may inspire other students, and even teachers, to engage in this unique form of experiential learning. On rare occasions, a student exchange may establish a strong link between two schools, a link that evolves into an international school partnership. School authorities that have students participating in student exchanges may consider the following expansion options.

1. Consider deepening the Alberta school's relationship with the hosting school. Might it be a good international partner school?
2. Encourage exchange students to share their experiences with students and staff. Inform educators about the opportunities for educator exchanges.

Beginning with Educator Exchanges

Like student exchanges, school authority based educator exchange programs require well-established and reliable partnerships. School authorities that begin to internationalize through educator exchange programs do so by promoting the educator exchange programs supported by Alberta Education (see Chapter 12: Educator Exchange Programs). These programs enhance the international capacity of the school authority and its schools because they bring international teachers into the classroom and provide Alberta teachers with international knowledge, skills and experience. Because exchange teachers know their partner teachers and host school relatively well, they are able to champion and help establish international school partnerships. Having participated in first-hand experiences with an exchange, they can also more effectively promote the idea of exchanges to their students and fellow teachers. School authorities with teachers participating in exchanges may consider the following expansion options.



1. Work with exchange teachers to establish and support international school partnerships in their schools.
2. Encourage exchange teachers to share their exchange experiences with their peers and students. Involve exchange teachers in the promotion of international learning; e.g., to inform students about possible student exchange opportunities and the value of exchanges.

Conclusion

There is no one right path to internationalization. Because all of the above international education programs support one another in indirect or direct ways (see diagram below), there are multiple paths to holistic internationalization. School authorities will begin in different places and the path they wish to take depends on the goals of their internationalization strategies and their capacity to implement programs.

