

Chapter 11

Student Exchange Programs



What Is a Student Exchange?

A student exchange is when students from an Alberta school authority study in another province or country and their partners from those provinces or countries come to study in their school authority in Alberta. It is literally the exchange of students. This broad definition, however, includes two different kinds of student exchanges.

One-to-one Reciprocal Student Exchanges

A one-to-one reciprocal student exchange involves two students who either a) switch places and study at one another's schools; or b) study together in an Alberta school authority and then in the exchange school for equal periods of time. Students may participate in organized reciprocal student exchange programs like Alberta's International Education Exchange Program for Students or Rotary Youth Exchanges, or they may arrange the exchange privately; i.e., parents agree to host the son or daughter of their friends or relatives and their friends or relatives agree to host their son or daughter.

One-to-one Reciprocal Student Exchange Funding

If an Alberta student is not present for the September 30 count because he or she is participating in an exchange, the Alberta school authority may still receive funding for that student from Alberta Education. In order to do so, the following conditions must be met.

- Before the start of the exchange, the student must complete a Reciprocal Student Exchange Approval Form and submit it to the school authority. The form may be downloaded from <http://education.alberta.ca/students/internationaleducation/studentexchange.aspx>; a copy is also available in Appendix E: Student Exchange Programs. The school authority then approves the exchange and submits the form to Alberta Education.

- If the participating students do not switch places, they must conduct the two phases of the exchange (i.e., studying together in Alberta and in the exchange destination) either in the same school year or in the following school year (see the Glossary of Terms in the *Funding Manual for School Authorities* available on Alberta Education’s Web site at <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/fundingmanual.aspx>).



Sometimes when students switch places, the Alberta student may be placed in a school that was not their partner’s home school and/or the partner may be placed in a school that was not the Alberta student’s home school. In these situations, a one-to-one reciprocal student exchange will be approved by Alberta Education providing that:

- the incoming student remains in the home school authority of the outgoing Alberta student
- the arrangement is approved by the Alberta school authority
- the exchange organization is the same.



School authorities will not receive funding for students who are participating in exchanges that are not reciprocal, as defined above.

Group Exchanges

Group exchanges involve the exchange of groups of students and do not require the one-to-one ratio of reciprocal student exchanges, although they may be organized this way. Group exchanges tend to be shorter in duration (i.e., Alberta students are abroad for weeks rather than months) and, therefore, do not affect per pupil funding in the same way as one-to-one reciprocal student exchanges.

Group exchanges are the natural extension of school twinnings or partnerships and, therefore, are often organized at the school level. They aim to introduce students to another country or culture and, in many cases, give students the confidence to participate in a one-to-one reciprocal exchange later in their educational career.



Note: All group exchanges organized by the school require the permission of the school authority.

Why Should I Encourage Students to Participate?

Student exchanges can be a transformative learning experience. They expose students to another way of living, another culture and sometimes another language. As students navigate their way through a new environment, they hone their problem-solving and coping skills, often resulting in increased independence and self-confidence. Unfamiliar situations or seemingly strange personal interactions give students the opportunity to develop their information gathering, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Exchanges are also a time for self-reflection and, with proper guidance, they not only broaden a students' knowledge of the world, they deepen their knowledge of themselves, their communities and their country.



Where Do I Start?

Investigate and Promote Existing Programs

Alberta's International Education Exchange Program for Students

Alberta's International Education Exchange Program for Students gives students, who are learning another language, the opportunity to immerse themselves in their language of study. Students can study in Germany, Japan, Mexico, Quebec or Spain for approximately three months and then host their German, Japanese, Mexican, Québécois or Spanish counterpart in Alberta for three months. The program is designed for Grade 11 students, but students from Grade 10 and Grade 12 may be considered.

TIP: Many exchange students choose to fast track their Grade 10 studies to free up time to go on an exchange in Grade 11. More information on timetabling for student exchanges can be found on Alberta's International Education Exchange Program for Students Web page at <http://education.alberta.ca/students/internationaleducation/studentexchange.aspx>.

Effective October 1, 2010, the Alberta Teachers' Association has become a delivery partner with Alberta Education and is responsible for the day-to-day operations in the administration of Alberta's International Education Exchange Program for Students.

More information on Alberta's International Education Exchange Program for Students can be found on Alberta Education's Web site at <http://education.alberta.ca/students/internationaleducation/studentexchange.aspx>.

Culture Point

Scenario

Mr. and Mrs. Jamieson's daughter, Tara, is participating in Alberta's International Education Exchange Program for Students with Japan. Tara has already spent two months in Japan and now her family is hosting her partner, Amiko. The Jamiesons are fascinated about other parts of the world and are looking forward to learning more about Japan and Japanese culture. They are also eager to share their traditions with Amiko and show her some of their favourite places in Alberta.

After a few weeks, Mr. and Mrs. Jamieson are concerned about Amiko and her adjustment to life in Alberta. She eats very little during meals and has been noticeably withdrawn. When they suggest an outing or activity, her reactions are usually very subdued. Tara has encouraged Amiko to confide in her, but with little success. The Jamiesons think that Amiko is homesick or experiencing culture shock. They want to help but are unsure what to do. They contact Tara's liaison teacher at the school for help.

Analysis

After speaking with Amiko, the liaison teacher realizes that this situation may not be attributable solely to homesickness and culture shock. At first, Amiko said that everything was fine. However, the liaison teacher knows that Japanese people tend to be indirect communicators and does not expect an "I'm unhappy" or "I'm frustrated" response from Amiko. The teacher rephrases her questions, changes her angle and probes a bit further. When she asks Amiko if she likes the food that is served, Amiko tells her that they eat a lot of pasta and that broccoli is an "interesting" vegetable. The teacher understands that the simple inclusion of these facts in the conversation is notable. They talk a bit longer before the liaison teacher realizes that Amiko is having trouble communicating her preferences to her host family.

The liaison teacher advises Amiko to be more direct with her homestay family. She explains that they come from a culture of direct communicators and they are not likely going to pick up on her subtleties. The teacher reassures Amiko that she will not be considered rude if she voices her preferences.

The liaison teacher also explains to the Jamiesons that Japanese people tend to be indirect communicators and that it is often difficult for Canadians, who are more direct communicators, to pick up on the nuances of the conversation. Often indirect communicators need to be invited to speak and even when they are invited, they will almost never complain or express dissatisfaction publicly. The liaison teacher advises the Jamiesons to give Amiko choices instead of asking her open-ended questions. For example, they could ask "would you like broccoli or peas?" instead of "what would you like for dinner?" Over time, the answers to these questions will reveal Amiko's preferences in an indirect way. She also tells them to be aware of language like "that seems very inconvenient," which is often a polite way of saying "no."

Finally, the liaison teacher also provides the Jamiesons with some resources that may help them to better understand Japanese cultural norms and behaviours (see the recommended reading list in Chapter 6: Cultural Considerations).

For more information on direct and indirect communication styles (also known as low and high context cultures), visit Chapter 6: Cultural Considerations.

The Yamate Exchange

In cooperation with Alberta Education and local school authorities, Yamate Gakuin School in Yokohoma, Japan coordinates two exchange programs.

- The long-term exchange program sees an Alberta student study at Yamate Gakuin School for a full school year while his or her Japanese partner studies in his or her Alberta school. Students are eligible to apply as long as they are 18 years old or younger on September 1 of the year they wish to participate. There is no Japanese language requirement, although selection is partially based on a demonstrated interest in Japanese language and culture.
- The short-term exchange sees a group of senior high school students from Yamate Gakuin School visit Alberta. Later in the year, generally in the summer, a group of students from Alberta visit Yamate Gakuin School.



The short-term exchange is coordinated by regional committees, which accept applications and develop the program for the Japanese visitors. It rotates through different regions of the province on a three-year cycle. The rotation for the next few years is as follows:

- 2010–2011: Southern Alberta region
- 2011–2012: Central Alberta region
- 2012–2013: Northern Alberta region



The short-term Yamate exchange is open to Alberta senior high school students who attend schools in the region scheduled to participate in the exchange program.

For more information on the Yamate student exchange programs, visit Alberta Education's Web site at <http://education.alberta.ca/students/internationaleducation/studentexchange.aspx>.

Exchanges Canada

Exchanges Canada is a "Government of Canada Initiative that helps Canadian youth connect with one another, experience the diversity of Canada's communities, languages and cultures, and get involved in the future of the country." While Exchanges Canada focuses on intra-country exchanges, its Web site lists a variety of international exchange, volunteer and travel programs for Canadian youth. To access the list of opportunities, visit <http://www.exchanges.gc.ca> (click on Youth and then Find an Opportunity; in the text of the Web page, click on Youth Exchanges and then on Other Opportunities).

Some of the listings are limited to individuals aged 18 and over. The following organizations have programs for individuals or groups of students in secondary school.

The inclusion of the following organizations is provided for general information purposes only and does not constitute or imply a recommendation from Alberta Education. Students and parents are encouraged to thoroughly research exchange programs before applying.

Intra-Canada exchanges

- 4-H Youth Exchanges Canada
- Canada Sports Friendship Exchange Programs
- Destination Clic
- Explore, Summer Language Bursary Program
- SEVEC Youth Exchanges
- YMCA Youth Exchanges Canada

International exchanges

- Canada World Youth

Although not included in the Exchanges Canada list, the Rotary Youth Exchange Program (<http://www.rotary.org>), Organisme Séjours Éducatifs Français (<http://www.osef.ca>) and Katimavik (<http://www.katimavik.org>) are well known international exchange programs.

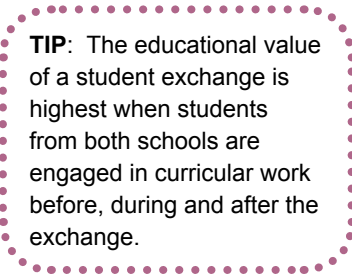


Develop an Exchange Program

When the above programs do not meet the needs of their students, some school authorities elect to develop their own group exchange program. A suggested approach is outlined below. You may also wish to consult the student exchange resources identified in the handbook's References.

Suggested steps	Sample timeline [★]
<p>1. Establishing a relationship with an international partner</p> <p>It is recommended that you develop a strong relationship with a partner abroad before you attempt to exchange students. Planning and implementing a safe and successful student exchange requires that organizers can trust and rely on one another. Usually, trust is built up over time by communicating and collaborating on other projects.</p> <p>For information on how to find an international partner school, see <i>A Guide to International School Partnerships</i> (included in Appendix D: International School Partnerships).</p>	<p>School year 1 and 2</p>
<p>2. Evaluating feasibility</p> <p>If both you and your partner are interested in the possibility of a group student exchange, it is worth conducting a brief feasibility study.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have the support of the necessary authorities? Schools are required to obtain the approval of their school authority before proceeding with a student exchange. • Does your partner have the support of the necessary authorities? • Do you and your partner have the human and financial capacity to plan and operate a student exchange? • Are parents supportive? • Are there any travel restrictions (e.g., visa restrictions, DFAIT travel warnings) that could prevent students from travelling? (See Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad.) <p>At this stage, some school authorities will send a representative to meet with the partner school or organization.</p>	<p>School year 3</p>

★ This timeline is an example only. Timelines will vary according to a number of factors, including the goals of the two partners, the timetables of the schools and the level of support provided by the school authority and community.

<p>3. Defining the educational goals of the exchange</p> <p>While there is much to be gained through any international travel experience, including tourist-oriented trips, schools have a responsibility to carefully plan and direct the learning that occurs on school-sponsored trips and exchanges. Answers to the following questions should form the foundation of any exchange.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we hope students will learn from participating in the exchange? • What educational activities might be appropriate before the exchange, during the exchange and after the exchange? How do these activities link to or enhance curriculum? • How will we know what students have learned? What are the indicators of success? <p style="text-align: right;">  TIP: The educational value of a student exchange is highest when students from both schools are engaged in curricular work before, during and after the exchange. </p> <p>Exchange organizers should discuss the educational goals with their international partner to ensure that they are both working toward a common purpose.</p> <p>See Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad for more information on educational activities and planning. The following resource may also provide you with some ideas on exchange activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cathy Hepburn and Rob Porkka's <i>Planning Student Exchange Programs: The Red Deer Experience</i> is available online at http://www.rdpsd.ab.ca/internationalservices/PDF/PlanningStudentExchanges.pdf. 	School year 3
<p>4. Developing a proposal</p> <p>As you and your partner develop the structure of the student exchange, consider the following factors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timelines – When is the best time of year for each of you to travel? How does this influence the planning process? How long will the exchange be? How might the time be scheduled? • Staffing – Who will accompany the students overseas? Who will host the partners while they are here? • Risk Management – What measures can be put in place to minimize the risks associated with international travel and hosting students from other countries? (See Travelling with Minors in Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad, and Homestay Provision in Chapter 16: Hosting International Visitors). 	School year 3

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs – How much will the program cost? Consider the cost of the following items with your partner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to plan the exchange: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – printing and photocopying – long distance calls or faxes • to travel abroad: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – flight – international medical insurance – cancellation and baggage insurance – in-country transportation – accommodation – in-country excursions or activities – meals – substitute teacher(s) (if applicable) • to host exchange partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – local transportation – accommodation – local excursions or activities – meals – substitute teacher(s) (if applicable). • How will you divide the above costs with your partner? How will your school authority cover its share of the costs? (See Chapter 8: Funding for a list of financial resources that you may be able to draw from.) • Establish protocols for when groups meet. Will you exchange gifts? If so, what kind of gifts? How will you encourage students to interact and learn more about each other? For more information, see Chapter 16: Hosting International Visitors. 	<p>School year 3</p>
<p>5. Promoting the program, accepting applications and selecting participants</p> <p>There are a variety of ways to promote a Student Exchange Program. Some example are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advertise in school newspapers and/or on school Web sites • mention student exchanges in morning announcements • present in targeted classes • hold parent and student information sessions. <p>Additional ideas are listed in the program handbooks for liaison teachers, available online at http://www.education.alberta.ca/students/internationaleducation/studentexchange.aspx.</p>	<p>School year 4</p>

TIP: If you have 10 or more people travelling on the exact same itinerary, you qualify as a group and will receive special concessions from most travel agents. For example, you will not have to pay for the flight in full at the time of booking. Exchange organizers often book group flights up to a year in advance. For more tips on international travel, see Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad.

<p>The information that exchange application forms collect vary according to the structure of the student exchange program. According to Alberta's <i>Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act</i>, you may only collect personal information that you require to effectively operate the student exchange program. You are also responsible for conducting due diligence in keeping personal information confidential.</p> <p>Cathy Hepburn and Rob Porkka's <i>Planning Student Exchange Programs: The Red Deer Experience</i>, available online at http://www.rdpsd.ab.ca/internationalservices/PDF/PlanningStudentExchanges.pdf, has some useful information on developing an application process and selecting students.</p>	
<p>6. Preparing for departure and hosting</p> <p>Students participating in a student exchange usually require three forms of preparation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Academic preparation. Academic preparation ensures that students have the skills and/or conceptual framework to engage in collaborative learning with their exchange partners. For example, if the purpose of the exchange is to complete a project that compares the climate of each place, students will need to have some background knowledge in climate before the exchange begins. If students are expected to converse in a second language during the exchange, students may be encouraged to complete language exercises.</p> <div data-bbox="760 766 1052 1291" style="border: 1px dashed #800080; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <p>TIP: Students who are participating in an exchange may miss some school. Participating students should discuss their absence with their teachers well in advance of the exchange so that alternate arrangements for readings, assignments and/or tests can be made.</p> </div> <p>Students may academically prepare for the exchange by completing a specific course. For more information on where international and intercultural content can be found in Alberta's programs of study, visit Chapter 7: Curriculum Links.</p> <p>Preparation can also occur after school; e.g., participating students may be asked to research material independently or as part of a group. Examples of pre-trip activities can be found in Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad.</p>	<p>School year 4</p>

- **Cultural preparation.** Before students host their partners or travel abroad, they should have some background in culture, intercultural communication and cultural adaptation. Details about the culture of their partner school (also known as culture-specific details) should also be covered. Students who have been introduced to this material tend to be more culturally conscious hosts. They are also able to communicate more effectively with their partners and adapt more readily to new cultural contexts.

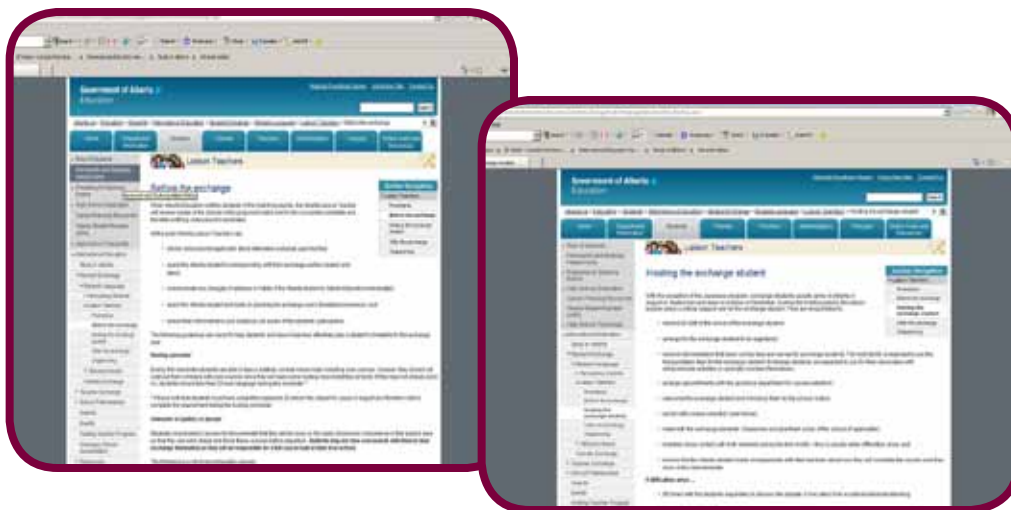
The following books may help you develop an introduction to culture for students participating in an exchange:

- L. Robert Kohls and John M. Knight, eds. *Developing Intercultural Awareness: A Cross-cultural Training Handbook*, 2nd ed. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc., 1994.
- Gert Jan Hofstede, Paul B. Pedersen and Geert Hofstede. *Exploring Culture: Exercises, Stories and Synthetic Cultures*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 2002.

See also Chapter 6: Cultural Considerations.

- **Logistical preparation.** Logistical preparation ensures that students and their parents know what is happening and when it is happening. It also assists students and parents as they sort out pragmatic details, such as what to pack. While logistical details vary from exchange program to exchange program, Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad outlines some standard things that organizers should cover in logistical preparation sessions.

Where possible, it is useful to have participating students' parents participate in both the cultural and logistical preparation sessions and/or activities.



<p>7. Implementing the program</p> <p>The most successful exchange programs are those that encourage students to be thoughtful about their experiences. Teachers may wish to include journaling, talking circles or other reflective activities to assist students in this endeavour.</p> <p>To develop broader support for the exchange, you may also wish to invite school authority representatives, community members or local media to witness or participate in exchange events or activities.</p> <div style="border: 1px dashed #800080; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <p>TIP: Encouraging students to communicate regularly with their exchange partners between the hosting period and the travel abroad period can help maintain momentum and enthusiasm for the exchange.</p> </div>	<p>School year 4</p>
<p>8. Debriefing and evaluating the program</p> <p>Debriefing is perhaps the most important part of a student exchange and, yet, it is often neglected. It is strongly recommended that exchange organizers take time to help students digest and make sense of their experience (ideally after the hosting and after the travel periods).</p> <p>Gibb's Reflective Cycle is one way teachers can structure debriefs. For more information on Gibb's Reflective Cycle, visit http://www2.hud.ac.uk/hhs/staffsupport/lqsu_files/Gibbs_Reflective_Cycle.pdf.</p> <p>The end of the student exchange program is also a period of reflection for exchange organizers. What went well? What did not go well? Discuss this with your partner. Consider the indicators that you identified at the beginning of the exchange. Did you both accomplish what you hoped to accomplish? What might you change if you decided to do the program again?</p>	<p>School year 4</p>

Conclusion

As the following quotes illustrate, a student exchange can be an eye-opening and life-altering experience.

“I discovered several things about myself as a result of this exchange. I learned how patient I could be while hosting [my partner] in Alberta. I learned to be more independent during my time in Japan. I found out how open I can be when it comes to trying new things, especially eating new foods. I find myself being more confident and outgoing since coming home. I like how I feel now about meeting new people, and I’m always jumping to try new things. Before this exchange, I would have never thought about reading a speech at my senior high school graduation, which I am now thinking about doing. This exchange changed my life in a very positive way. I have grown so much as a person as a result of my time spent in Japan and by hosting [my partner] in my own home.”

- Participant in the 2008–2009 Alberta–Hokkaido exchange, Alberta’s International Education Exchange Program for Students

“I know that everyone goes on these trips hoping and wishing for different things; some just hope to have a good time but the majority wish (secretly) to change. They want to be different. Maybe a different version of themselves, maybe a whole new person ... I fall under the category of wanting to change, and I did. But, as fate often has it, I did not change into the person that I thought I would. I became much, much more of the person that I was.”

- Participant in the 2008–2009 Alberta–Quebec exchange, Alberta’s International Education Exchange Program for Students

“This ... was the best experience I have had so far in my life. I have been able to start learning another language (in addition to French) and make good friends. I would highly recommend this experience to anyone. It was an excellent learning experience ...”

- Red Deer student on studying at Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School’s twin school in Guadalajara, Mexico

Educators play an important role in preparing and supporting students as they embark upon this unique academic and personal journey. Educators interested in embarking upon a journey of their own may choose to participate in an educator exchange program. These programs will be explored in the next chapter.

CERTIFICATE of COMPLETION

Awarded to

Name of Student

For participation in the 2009-2010 Student Exchange Program
Between Alberta and Hokkaido

Sponsored by Alberta Education



Waldemar Reimer, Director,
International Education Branch, Alberta Education



You may find the following sections in this handbook helpful.

- Chapter 6: Cultural Considerations
- Chapter 7: Curriculum Links
- Chapter 8: Funding
- Chapter 16: Hosting International Visitors
- Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad
- Appendix D: *A Guide to International School Partnerships*
- Appendix E:
 - Reciprocal Student Exchange Approval Form (Instructions)
 - Alberta's International Education Exchange Program for Students (Student Application)
 - Alberta's International Education Exchange Program for Students (Program Guidelines)