

Chapter 12

Educator Exchange Programs



What Is an Educator Exchange?

An Educator Exchange Program provides opportunities for Alberta educators to teach in another province or country and for their partners from the other provinces or countries to teach in Alberta.

Like student exchanges, educator exchanges vary in structure and length; however, they all rely upon the pairing of an educator from Alberta with an educator from another region or country. They are, therefore, distinct from international teaching placements, which unilaterally place an Alberta teacher in an international school abroad, or a visiting teacher program, which places visiting teachers in Alberta school authorities.

The term educator exchange is used purposefully to include both teachers and administrators. Alberta educators are educators that reside and work in Alberta and are certificated by Alberta Education.

Full-year Exchanges

Full-year exchanges are usually post-to-post exchanges. In other words, the Alberta teacher assumes the teaching responsibilities of his or her partner teacher for the year and the incoming teacher assumes the teaching responsibilities of the Alberta teacher. During a full-year exchange, teachers will often stay in one another's houses. In order to participate, a teacher must have a continuing contract and the support of his or her superintendent and principal.



To be able to teach unsupervised in an Alberta classroom, all teachers—even exchange teachers—must be certificated by Alberta Education. To facilitate full-year exchanges, Alberta Education has an agreement with educational authorities from several countries and assists with the temporary certification of incoming teachers who fall under these memoranda. School authorities should not develop full-year teacher exchange programs without first consulting with Alberta Education.



Short-term Exchanges

Short-term exchanges are structured to facilitate job shadowing and team teaching. They pair an Alberta teacher with a teacher from another region or country. The pair then spends one to two weeks together in Alberta and one to two weeks together abroad. Short-term exchanges are more accessible than full-year exchanges because Alberta teachers can participate while maintaining their teaching responsibilities. To further minimize disruption to the Alberta classroom, the abroad portion of short-term exchanges can be scheduled to coincide with school breaks or holidays.

Because Alberta teachers remain in their classrooms during the exchange, incoming teachers do not need to be certificated.

Why Should I Encourage Educators to Participate?

Educator exchange is experiential professional development at its best. It benefits school communities in multiple ways. While abroad, Alberta educators gain broader perspectives on education, and, in turn, reflect more deeply upon—and imagine greater possibilities for—their own practice. The strategies they learn, the knowledge they gain and the skills they develop while working in another country all benefit their school and classes when they return. In the meantime, international educators who teach in Alberta bring new perspectives and expertise into Alberta schools. Their presence in the school community raises international awareness and provides their Alberta colleagues with opportunities to develop and/or hone their intercultural skills. Educator exchanges

While abroad, Alberta educators are ambassadors. They raise Alberta's international profile and sometimes introduce people to Alberta for the first time. Alberta educators are also ambassadors for their home cities or towns and school authorities, and are expected to represent them well by behaving in a responsible and respectful manner.

continue to pay dividends even after the exchange is completed, particularly when participants keep in touch with their exchange partners and/or colleagues abroad and can, therefore, assist fellow teachers and/or their school authority in developing international collaborative learning opportunities for students.



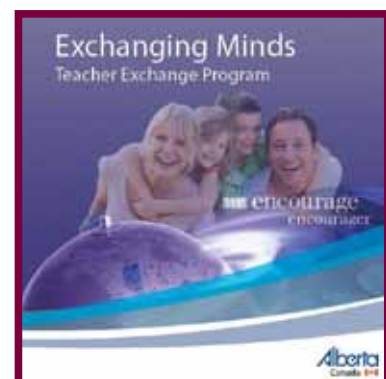
A 30-year celebration of teachers who participated in Alberta's International Education Exchange Program for Teachers. Picture taken November 2009.

Where Do I Start?

Investigate and Promote Existing Programs

Alberta's International Education Exchange Program for Teachers

Alberta Education supports full-year and short-term exchange programs. Participants in the post-to-post program spend a school year (August to July) teaching in the United Kingdom or a calendar year (January to December) teaching in Australia. Opportunities are also available to teach in other provinces in Canada and, where language competencies allow, in Switzerland, Germany and Denmark. Participants in short-term exchanges are matched with a partner from Germany or Denmark. There are no language requirements for the short-term exchange. For more information on Alberta's International Education Exchange Program for Teachers, visit <http://education.alberta.ca/students/internationaleducation/teacherexchange.aspx>. Applications for long- and short-term exchanges and promotional and support material can be found in Appendix F: Educator Exchange Programs.



Develop an Exchange Program

When the above programs do not meet the needs of their educators, some school authorities elect to develop their own exchange programs. School authorities that wish to develop a full-year exchange program should contact Alberta Education.

For school authorities that are interested in developing short-term exchanges, a suggested approach is outlined below. You may also wish to consult the handbook's References.

The Role of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)

Participants in Alberta Education's full-year exchange educator program continue to be employed and compensated by their home school authority. While on exchange, Alberta teachers remain members of the ATA and continue to receive support and service from the ATA. They also remain bound by the ATA's Code of Conduct.

Incoming exchange teachers are not eligible to be members of the ATA because they are not employed by an Alberta school authority. However, they are bound by the ATA's Code of Conduct. The ATA may also offer them complimentary services.

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 the Educator Exchange Program.



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 develop an educator exchange. For information on how to find an international partner, see Chapter 10: International School Partnerships.</p> <p>Because a safe and successful educator exchange requires that organizers can trust and rely on one another, school authorities are encouraged to build trust with their partner by communicating and collaborating on other projects before embarking upon an educator exchange project.</p>	School year 1 and 2
<p>2. Evaluating feasibility</p> <p>If both you and your partner are interested in the possibility of an educator 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? Does your partner? • Are there any restrictions (e.g., certification restrictions, Visa restrictions, DFAIT travel warnings) that could prevent the exchange? (See Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad.) <p>At this stage, some school authorities will send a school authority representative to meet with the partner school or organization.</p>	School year 3
<p>3. Defining the goals of the exchange</p> <p>Establishing the goals of the exchange with your partner will ensure that you are both working toward the same (or at least complementary) goals. The following questions are meant to guide your thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you hope educators will gain from this experience? What is its main purpose? • What activities will help you achieve these goals? • How do these activities link to participants' professional development plans? How might they subsequently benefit students and Alberta schools? • How will you know if the program has been successful? Take time to collectively identify indicators of success. 	School year 3

★ 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.

4. Developing a proposal

School year 3

As you and your partner develop the structure of an educator exchange, consider the following factors.

- Timelines – When is the best time of year for participants to travel? How does this influence the planning process?
- Staffing – Will substitute teachers be required? How many educators will be able to participate? Who will host the partners while they are in Alberta?
- Risk Management – What measures can be put in place to minimize the risks associated with international travel and hosting? (See Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad.)
- Costs – How much will the program cost? Consider the cost of the following items with your partner:
 - to plan the exchange:
 - printing and photocopying
 - long distance calls or faxes
 - to travel abroad:
 - flight
 - international medical insurance
 - cancellation and baggage insurance
 - documents required to travel abroad (i.e., passport, visa)
 - documents required to teach abroad, if necessary (i.e., certification/ registration, medicals or security checks)
 - in-country transportation
 - accommodation
 - in-country excursions or activities
 - meals
 - substitute teacher(s) (if applicable)
 - to host exchange partners:
 - 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.) It is strongly recommended that this proposal be approved by the appropriate authority within the school authority.

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. For more tips on international travel, see Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad.

5. Promoting the program, accepting applications and selecting participants

School year 4

There are a variety of ways to promote an educator exchange program. Some examples are:

- ask administrators to highlight the program at staff meetings
- send e-mails to teachers in the school authority
- hold lunchtime or after school information sessions.

The information that exchange application forms collect vary according to the structure of the exchange program. According to Alberta's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, you may only collect personal information that you require to effectively operate the educator exchange program. You are also responsible for conducting due diligence in keeping personal information confidential.

The compatibility of the Alberta educator and his or her international partner heavily influences the success of an exchange and the quality of learning that takes place. It is recommended that the school authority consider the following factors when matching educators:

- teaching assignments
- gender
- age
- common interests.

The Alberta Educator Exchange Application Forms may provide administrators with an idea of the types of fields that are included in an application (see Appendix F: Educator Exchange Programs).



6. Preparing for departure and hosting

School year 4

Educators participating in an exchange program usually require three forms of preparation.

- **Professional preparation.** Professional preparation ensures that participants are prepared to examine the topic and/or area of specialty with their counterparts. They are familiar with the topic and understand how it is managed in Alberta's education system. For example, if educators are exchanging to collectively examine how to best support junior high school students as they transition to senior high school, they would be familiar with the issues that Alberta junior high school students face, what supports are currently in place and so on.

When an exchange involves more than one Alberta educator to the same exchange destination for the same purpose, school authorities may encourage participants to meet and share their knowledge and perspectives on the issues at hand.

- **Cultural preparation.** Before they host their partners or travel abroad, educators should have some background in culture, intercultural communication and cultural adaptation. Details about the culture of their partner (also known as culture-specific details) should also be covered. Educators 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.

You may recommend the following reading to educators who are planning on participating in an exchange:

- Alan Cornes. *Culture from the Inside Out: Travel and Meet Yourself*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2004.
- L. Robert Kohls. *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, 4th ed. London, ENG: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2001.
- Craig Storti. *The Art of Crossing Cultures*, 2nd ed. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2001.

Chapter 6: Cultural Considerations may also provide some useful information.

- **Logistical preparation.** Logistical preparation ensures that educators (and their administrators) know what is happening and when it is happening. It also assists educators 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 items that organizers should cover in logistical preparation sessions.

<p>7. Implementing the program</p> <p>The most successful exchange programs are those that encourage educators to be thoughtful about their experience. Coordinators may wish to include journaling, talking circles or other reflective activities to assist educators 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: 2px dotted #800080; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; display: inline-block; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>TIP: Encouraging educators 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>	School year 4
<p>8. Debriefing and evaluating the program</p> <p>Debriefing is perhaps the most important part of an exchange and, yet, it is often neglected. It is strongly recommended that exchange organizers take time to enable educators to debrief their experience (ideally after the hosting and after the travel periods).</p> <p>Gibbs Reflective Cycle is one way to structure debriefs. For more information on Gibbs Reflective Cycle, visit http://www2.hud.ac.uk/hhs/staffsupport/lqsu_files/Gibbs_Reflective_Cycle.pdf. Alberta's International Education Exchange Program for Teachers also hosts debriefs for its exchanges.</p> <p>Upon completion of the exchange program, some school authorities also ask participating teachers to submit a report outlining how the exchange has enhanced or changed their teaching practice. In situations where a group of Alberta educators represented a school authority abroad, action plans have also been developed to incorporate learning into existing practice.</p> <p>The end of the program is 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>	School year 4



(Australian Exchange Teachers; picture taken at orientation session January 2010.)

Conclusion

Educators are the champions of internationalization in schools and classrooms. It is, therefore, important that they have a global perspective and understand the benefits of international learning. Exchanges provide educators with the opportunity to develop both. By bringing international educators into Alberta schools, exchanges also provide the school community with the opportunity to connect with another culture or part of the world. International student programs benefit the school community in a similar way.

You may find the following sections in this handbook helpful:

- Chapter 6: Cultural Considerations
- Chapter 10: International School Partnerships
- Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad
- Chapter 18: Support Organizations and What They Offer
- Appendix D: *A Guide to International School Partnerships*
- Appendix F:
 - Alberta Educator Exchange Long-term Application Package
 - Alberta–Denmark Short-term Teacher Exchange Application Form
 - Alberta–Germany Short-term Teacher Exchange Application Form
 - Exchanging Minds: Teacher Exchange Program (Brochure)
 - Exchanging Minds: Teacher Exchange Program (DVD)
 - Exchanging Minds: Short-term Teacher Exchange Program (Fact Sheet)

