

Sarasota County Schools

Office of School Choice and Charter Schools

FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

The school board recognizes the importance of intercultural and international education as part of a school program.

Any student from a foreign country sponsored by a Foreign Exchange Student Program who fulfills all eligibility requirements (applicable federal, state, and District regulations), including the approval of the principal, may attend a Sarasota County high school at the discretion of the Sarasota County School Board. All students must be approved by the District, through the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools before enrolling in a District school. In no case can the number of foreign students exceed 1% of the school's enrollment. The District reserves the right to limit the number of students placed by any sponsor or from any country.

Organizations and institutions sponsoring students must be approved by the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET) and have a J-1 Exchange Visa in order to be eligible to participate in the Foreign Exchange Visitor Program.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

1. **Sponsors:** CSIET- approved organizations that are sponsoring a foreign exchange student shall supply the name, address and telephone number of the local area representative residing in Sarasota County.
2. **Local Area Representatives:** Local area representatives shall be residents of Sarasota County and available at any time in the event of an emergency or a concern involving the sponsored foreign exchange student.
3. **Students:** Students shall meet the following eligibility requirements prior to acceptance:
 - A. Be sponsored by a CSIET-approved foreign exchange organization.
 - B. Be at least 15 but not more than 18½ years of age on the date of enrollment in the Exchange program *and* not have completed more than 11 years of primary and secondary education (exclusive of kindergarten). **Students who have already graduated will not be allowed to enroll in a District high school.**
 - C. Be accepted by a host family approved by the CSIET approved sponsoring organization. **The student cannot be hosted by the local area representative seeking to have him or her assigned to a District high school.**
 - D. Gain entry into the United States with a J-1 Exchange Visa.
 - E. Provide evidence of sufficient knowledge of the English language. **The student must be able to participate in high school classes in which he or she is enrolled in.**
 - F. Provide an English translation of his or her official academic transcript reflecting at least two years of core and elective courses prior to entry into the program. **A description of each course shall also be included.**
 - G. Provide proof that the immunization requirements have been met based on Florida law.
 - H. Provide proof of health, accident and liability insurance coverage that is valid in the United States.
 - I. Agree to be in attendance for one full academic school year.

I _____, local area representative, acknowledge receiving and reviewing the procedures and guidelines to have a foreign exchange student approved for admissions into a Sarasota County public school. _____ (Initial)

PROCEDURES FOR ADMISSION OF ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

The sponsoring organization must apply for and obtain the approval for admission of the foreign exchange student from the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools through the local area representative at least fifteen (15) working days prior to the first day of classes. The local area representative is required to follow all policies, guidelines and procedures set by Sarasota County School Board when requesting approval to have a foreign exchange student assigned to a District high school.

1. **Approval/Admissions Process**
 - A. A copy of the Sarasota County School Board Foreign Exchange Program Timeline and Eligibility Requirements and Procedures shall be sent to local area representatives when requesting a school assignment for an eligible foreign exchange student.
 - B. The local area representative is required to schedule a meeting with the Supervisor of School Choice and Charter Schools to review the Foreign Exchange Application Packets when they are submitted for action (approval or denial).
 - C. The local area representative shall provide the Supervisor of School Choice and Charter Schools with two (2) Foreign Exchange Application Packets, which will be reviewed during the interview.
 - D. Written approval or denial of admission shall be given by the Supervisor to the local coordinator of the sponsoring organization.
Note: Incomplete application packets will not be considered for a school assignment.
 - E. Upon receiving approval, the local representative will schedule an appointment with the principal of the assigned District school to gain his or her signature acknowledging the assignment and provide school records for the incoming foreign exchange student.
 - F. The Supervisor will notify the school principal of all approvals and provide the names and grade levels of the foreign exchange student(s) who will be attending the assigned school.
 - G. The sponsoring organization's local area representative **and** a member of the host family shall accompany the exchange student when registering him or her at the approved assigned school.
 - H. The local area representative and the host family will assist the foreign exchange student with getting acquainted with the assigned District school and the rules governing the behavior of all students. Formal school entrance shall begin on the first day that school opens for all District students.
 - I. The foreign exchange student shall follow school rules and shall participate fully in the educational program provided.
2. **Supervision**
 - A. It is the sponsor's responsibility to make all travel and accommodation arrangements, including securing the host family.
 - B. It is the sponsor's responsibility to resolve problems which arise between the student, the host family, and/or the assigned District school including, if necessary, changing the host family or arranging the early return of the exchange student due to unresolved or personal difficulties.
 - C. It is the responsibility of the sponsor to notify the District school principal **and** the Supervisor of the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools of all changes pertaining to a host family placement (in district and outside of Sarasota County Schools), an address change of the host family and/or an early return of a student to his or her country of origin.
 - D. A foreign exchange student should not be withdrawn from the assigned school **prior** to the sponsor providing the Supervisor of the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools an official written notification.
3. **Financial Support**

As agreed upon, all expenses, including any school-related expenses are the responsibility of the sponsoring organization, the host family and the foreign exchange student.
4. **Employment**

Exchange students are not permitted to take regular or part-time jobs during their stay in the United States.
5. **Athletic Eligibility**

Exchange students shall follow School Board policies and be governed by the Florida High School Athletics Association rules and regulations regarding participation in inter-scholastic athletic competition.
6. **Completion**

The student shall be issued an official transcript of all work completed in the District upon completion of their time in Sarasota County Schools.
7. **Monitoring**

CSJET-approved programs are monitored by the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools for quality of foreign exchange student recruited (e.g., English proficiency, attitude, behavior) and appropriateness of host family placement (e.g., high school age student in host family home, family stability).

Sponsoring organizations which have violated requirements of student eligibility shall not be eligible to submit applications for students to attend Sarasota County high schools for a period of two years. Programs with a second violation shall be permanently removed as approved programs for placement in Sarasota County.