



COUNCIL ON STANDARDS FOR  
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL

EFFECTIVE 2024

# MODEL SCHOOL PRACTICES

for BridgeUSA (J-1)  
Student Exchange



# PURPOSE

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The Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET), in partnership with the secondary-school community, has developed new Model School Practices to assist American schools with the implementation and administration of successful international student exchange programs. CSIET's Model School Practices were developed with valuable input from high school administrators, exchange program managers, and national advocates for youth exchange. These guiding principles seek to provide a foundation for the development of local school policies that encourage international exchange and global competency through the enrollment of BridgeUSA<sup>1</sup> (J-1) students. Due to its reliance on volunteer host families and willing host schools, this program is uniquely American and unparalleled in the world of high school exchange. What better way for the youth of today to meet the global challenges of tomorrow than building bridges of cross-cultural understanding.



# INTRODUCTION

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More than half a century ago the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (better known as the Fulbright-Hays Act), was established “to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations.” International student exchange has garnered bipartisan support every year since. BridgeUSA students are an essential part of the U.S. Department of State’s public diplomacy program.

<sup>1</sup> As of October 2020, U.S. Department of State announced BridgeUSA as the new brand identity for the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) for all J-1 organizations including J-1 Secondary School Student Program Designees



**These cross-cultural experiences offer unique opportunities for American schools to help their students and communities directly participate in American public diplomacy and contribute to national security:**

- ▶ **LEARN FIRST-HAND ABOUT OTHER CULTURES AND CUSTOMS THROUGH THE EYES OF A PEER**
- ▶ **CREATE LIFE-LONG FRIENDSHIPS ACROSS CULTURES**
- ▶ **BROADEN PERSPECTIVES ON THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD, AND THEIR ROLE IN BOTH**
- ▶ **BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND HOW CONNECTED THE PEOPLES AND COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD ARE TO EACH OTHER AND**
- ▶ **OPEN YOUNG MINDS TO THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING OTHER LANGUAGES AND CULTURES, AND THE ROLES THAT THEY WILL PLAY IN THEIR FUTURE PLANS AND LIFE EXPERIENCES**



**BridgeUSA**

BridgeUSA programs provide exchange students with a cultural experience through which they develop a balanced understanding of the United States and their own cultures. These programs also encourage new perspectives for your own students that open their minds to the world. International student exchange helps your students develop global competency – one exchange at a time. Thank you for your support of these life changing public diplomacy programs. We hope that CSIET's Model School Practices for BridgeUSA Student Exchange will aid in your effort to nurture our next generation of world leaders.



# BRIDGEUSA EXCHANGE PROGRAM COMMITMENTS

As a school leader, you depend upon the professional support of the BridgeUSA exchange programs with which you work to ensure the greatest possible success for exchanges in your school. You are encouraged to work with organizations that are designated by the U.S. Department of State as BridgeUSA sponsors.

## SCHOOLS CAN EXPECT BRIDGEUSA EXCHANGE PROGRAMS TO:

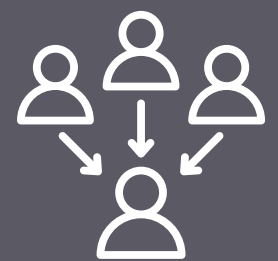
1. Be certified by CSIET and listed in the most current CSIET Advisory List (for the current list visit <https://www.csiet.org/advisory-list/>).



2. Adhere to the rules and regulations set forth by the U.S. Department of State for the BridgeUSA Program.



3. Provide a qualified and trained local representative living in or near the school community.



4. Identify, interview in person, and screen all potential host families, and provide orientation and ongoing support for both the host family and student.



5. Prepare exchange students for their time in the U.S. and monitor their academic progress during the school year.



6. Ensure that exchange students are compliant with your school's health requirements, including documentation of required immunizations and other guidance that your school or the CDC provides.



7. Provide medical and accident insurance that meets or exceeds U.S. Department of State guidelines.



8. Provide your school with a complete student application, including detailed student information, proof of sufficient language ability to function in an American classroom, original transcript of student's high school grades with English translation, a recent physical exam, and necessary medical history disclosing any medical/physical restrictions.



9. Seek the school's formal acceptance and enrollment authorization before exchange students leave their home countries and by BridgeUSA's program deadline.





# BRIDGEUSA EXCHANGE STUDENT COMMITMENTS

The most successful and rewarding exchanges occur when exchange students are well qualified and prepared to fully participate in American school life.

## SCHOOLS CAN EXPECT BRIDGEUSA EXCHANGE STUDENTS TO:



1. Have sufficient proficiency in the English language, a commitment to academic coursework and a willingness to participate in social and extracurricular activities.



2. Be qualified to participate in regular classes and maintain a typical schedule.



3. 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.



4. Maintain passing grades while on program.



5. Follow all school policies and rules.



6. Understand that enrollment does not come with a right to receive a diploma.



# BRIDGEUSA MODEL SCHOOL COMMITMENTS

Model Schools recognize the value of exchanges to encourage global competency among their own students and community, promote cultural awareness and mutual understanding among students, and foster a more globally-minded school environment.

## BRIDGEUSA MODEL SCHOOLS WILL:

1. Enroll, without tuition, students whose J-1 visa is sponsored by the U.S. State Department-designated organizations. Exchange students may be required to pay normal school fees, including standard course and extra-curricular activity fees.



2. Set an exchange student enrollment goal of at least 1% of the total student body while acknowledging that conditions vary locally.

1%

3. Have established flexible requirements and deadlines to maximize exchange student enrollment.



4. Provide exchange students all rights and privileges accorded to community students - EXCEPT the right to a diploma.



5. Have no obligation to provide language tutoring or ESL to BridgeUSA students.



6. Integrate exchange students into the school's social fabric by encouraging exchange students to participate enthusiastically in school life and activities.



7. Encourage exchange students to spread the word about their country and themselves, both formally by making presentations in classes and to community groups, and informally by encouraging interactions between the exchange student and the student body.

