

HOW TO ORGANIZE A SCHOOL EXCHANGE PROGRAM

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Since 2006, Forum Language Experience has supported schools in the US and Europe in organizing more than 250 exchanges. Through our exchange program, our team will:

- Match you with a partner school in Spain or France.
- Advise and support you and your partner school during the planning of your exchange.
- Organize and book travel services (based on your group's requirements) to ease the planning of the travel portion of your trip.

1) EXCHANGE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

An exchange consists of three steps:

1

A small group of students & teacher(s) from abroad visit your school and stay with host families for 10-16 days.

2

Students stay connected during the school year.

3

Your students and you visit your partner school abroad and stay with your exchange partners whom you previously hosted.

2) BENEFITS OF AN EXCHANGE

Affordable: Travel costs are significantly lower than other travel abroad programs because participants are hosted by their counterparts and spend most of their time in school or with their host families.

Involve all students: Exchange programs create partnerships that engage the entire school community and provide cultural exposure and connection for all students, not just those that travel.

Long-term partnership: A successful exchange can start a long-lasting relationship that benefits both present and future students.

Global awareness and language acquisition: An exchange program gives students the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in a different culture, practice and improve their target language skills, and develop meaningful relationships with peers from a different part of the world.

3) IS AN EXCHANGE PROGRAM RIGHT FOR YOUR SCHOOL?

Early planning and communication are essential aspects in creating a successful exchange. A few things to think about when starting this process:

Authorization

Approval from your administration and school board are essential for an exchange. Start by speaking to your principal about whether you will be able to both travel with your students and host a group of international students. You must have the capacity to accommodate, in class and within your school, a group of visiting students attending school on average between four and seven days (exact number of days to be determined with your partner school).

If your administration approves, you may also need to schedule time at your next school board meeting to get their approval as well. This process can take several months depending on your school.

Ability to Host

Once you have approval from your administration for hosting the students at school, you need to think about whether you can find appropriate families to host the visiting students in their homes. It is required in an exchange program that students are hosted one per home in a safe, supervised, and welcoming environment. The more you know your students and their families, the better. You will also need to be able to host your visiting teacher. Keep in mind that while we will pair you with a partner school based on the number of students traveling in each group (among other factors), the group sizes and gender don't always match. You may need to find additional families that are willing to host even if their child is not traveling.

When can you travel?

Choose the dates that you would like to travel. The more flexible you are, the more options you will have at the time of finding a partner school. It is important to note that exchanges can only happen while schools are in session as the goal is not only to be hosted but also to attend the local school. Note that if you are not able to travel until June, it may be more difficult to find a partner as many French and Spanish schools are starting finals by then.

When can you host?

Flexibility with hosting dates will give you more options as well. Many European schools like to travel in the fall, as soon as school starts, so it's good to have your partnership established the spring prior to their travel.

Planning Activities

When you have your partner school, you and the corresponding organizing teacher will want to plan activities for the students during the exchange. First, decide how many days will be spent in classes versus on excursions. Usually Americans prefer to spend less time in class and more time sight-seeing while Europeans prefer to integrate themselves in daily school life. Use this opportunity to plan special activities that will involve other students at your school, coordinate with other teachers which classes the students will attend, and work with your families to plan some activities outside school hours to make sure all the visiting students are enjoying their time in your town.

4) STEPS TO AN EXCHANGE

1. **Get approval from your administration** to have your school participate in a reciprocal exchange program.
2. **Fill out a [School Profile Form](#)**. Based on your school's profile, we will look for a compatible partner school abroad.
3. **A tentative exchange partner is found.** Forum Language Experience will put you in contact with your partner teacher. Organizing teachers will then agree on:



Travel dates



Number of days at school



Excursions with school/family



Hosting teacher chaperones



Number of participating students

Forum Language Experience will act only as an adviser at this stage. Partner schools should agree on these aspects directly. Communication with your partner teacher is essential for creating a successful, long-lasting exchange.

4. **Finalize your itinerary with your Forum Program Adviser.** Your itinerary will include a minimum of airfare, travel insurance, and airport transfers at your destination. It may also include excursions as requested by your group. Any additional activity planned by you or your exchange partner and not included on the itinerary will need to be coordinated directly with your exchange partner.
5. **Set up an informational meeting to recruit interested students and families.** Your Forum Program Adviser will provide you with materials to help you promote the trip and will set up a group web account where your students can enroll, make online payments, and fill out a student profile form. You will be able to confirm student participation via the web account.
6. **Pair the students.** You will work with the organizing teacher at your partner school to match students based on their profile forms. At this time, you should also discuss details, such as school rules, dress code, local transportation, and school meals.
7. **Meet with host families.** Meet with the families before hosting to review hosting expectations (refer to our [Parent's Guide](#)) and ensure families are aware of any special activities planned while the students are in town.
8. **You are ready to go!** Approximately three to four weeks before your group's departure (to the host country), Forum will post on your group web account your final itinerary, airline tickets and additional guidance and support documents for your travel abroad.

5) REFERENCES & TESTIMONIALS

<p>Sharon High School Exchange in Madrid, Spain 181 Pond Street Sharon, MA 02067 Tel. (781) 784-1554 Ms. Abigail Theberge</p>	<p>Seven Hills School Exchange in Lille, France 5400 Red Bank Road Cincinnati, OH 45227 Tel. (513) 728-2400 Ms. Ann Griep</p>
<p>William Fremd High School Exchange in Málaga, Spain 1000 South Quentin Road Palatine, IL 60067 Tel. (847) 755-2600 Ms. Lissette Parreno-Egas</p>	<p>Winnacunnet High School Exchange in Picardie, France 1 Alumni Drive Hampton, NH 03842 Tel. (603) 926-3395 Ms. Kelley Richards</p>

"I would 100% recommend an exchange program to other students; it's the best opportunity in the world to meet new people, experience a new culture, try new foods, and just get out of your comfort zone!"

-10th grade student from William Fremd High School

"Our students have had an amazing experience with their host families. They have been welcomed as another son or daughter into their families. They have attended graduations and weddings, gone to the countryside with their families, and really been welcomed with open arms into every aspect of their host families' lives. The connections they've made are something I know will last them for the rest of their lives."

-Spanish teacher from William Fremd High School

"Believe it or not, I'm not inquiring about the pending trip to Spain!! I just wanted to express to you what a great experience and pleasure it was to host a Spanish student... it was truly a wonderful experience for Lindsay as well as my husband and me. Our student, Isa, was terrific! I never imagined saying good-bye would be so difficult. I could sense that Isa was sad about leaving prior to departing for the bus. I wrote her parents a letter that I asked her to read prior to leaving, so I was sure she was able to not only translate it, but read my handwriting. That is when the tears began. Thank you so much for all of your hard work putting together such a great program for our kids to enjoy and learn from!"

-Parent from Keene High School