

Lewistown School District

STUDENTS

3145P

International Student Exchange Programs

Fergus High School and the Board recognize the educational value of participating in international student exchange programs. Through such programs Fergus High students obtain greater understanding of cultures of other countries. Likewise, students attending our school from other countries will obtain greater understanding of our country and its culture.

International Exchange Program Requirements

To be considered for approval by Fergus High School, international student exchange programs must meet the following minimum requirements:

1. The program must be designed by and in good standing with the United States Department of State as a secondary student exchange visitor program, also called the *high school exchange program*.
2. The program must be approved by and in good standing with the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET).
3. The program must have a local representative residing within reasonable driving distance, who will meet with school personnel, the student, and the host family on a regular basis.
4. Orientation, both pre-departure and upon arrival in the United States, must be provided to help international exchange students adjust to a new culture and, perhaps, a new language. Ongoing contact and support from the local representative of the exchange organization must also be provided.
5. Orientation must be provided to the host family in advance of the international exchange student's arrival. The family should be acquainted with the needs and requirements of housing a visitor for a long period of time, advised of potential problems in hosting an exchange student, and provided suggestions for coping with these problems. Ongoing contact and support from the local representative of the exchange organization must also be provided.

International Exchange Student Admission Requirements

The District regards students sponsored by approved international exchange organizations as international exchange students. In addition to the appropriate visa, international exchange students must meet the following criteria:

1. The student must not have turned nineteen (19) years of age before September 1 of the year of enrollment.
2. The student must not have graduated from high school or its equivalent.

3. The student must reside with a legal adult resident of the District in Lewistown. Every effort should be made to place international exchange students with host families where one (1) or more students from that family attend the same school the exchange student will attend.
4. The student must be proficient in the English language. They must be effective oral and written communicators, able to use instructional materials and textbooks printed in English, and able to function in the regular educational program without special professional assistance.
5. The student must have average or above-average grades in the student's home school and must not be receiving special professional assistance to function in the regular academic program.
6. To request admission, the international exchange organization or privately sponsored international exchange student must submit the following documents:
 - a. A copy of the face page of the host family agency application.
 - b. Three (3) years of official transcripts and/or records of prior education from the student's home school and an English translation of the same documents. The records should reflect courses taken and grades/credits earned and include evidence the student has successfully completed a minimum of three (3) years of instruction in the English language, which includes speaking and listening as well as reading and writing.
 - c. Evidence of required immunizations.
 - d. Evidence the student has passed a test of English-language proficiency, such as the SLEP, TOEFL, or FSI, at a level of *Proficient* or higher. For the SLEP test, that would be a rating of 48 or higher.
 - e. A written application or letter of application from the potential international exchange student to the District or school. This application/letter should provide pertinent information about the student (e.g., name, age, birth date, home country, level of education); the student's reasons for wanting to attend school in Lewistown; the projected duration of enrollment; and the name, address, and phone number(s) of the international exchange student's parents/guardians, the host family, and the local international exchange program representative.
 - f. Two (2) character references: One (1) from the student's English language teacher, documenting the type of instruction the student has had and the student's level of proficiency, and one (1) from someone who has been acquainted with the student for at least one (1) year.

Additional Documents for Placement of Privately Sponsored International Exchange Students

Privately sponsored exchange students must also provide the following documents:

1. Proof of financial responsibility (e.g., affidavit of support, letters from parents and host family, detailing how support will be provided and by whom). An exact dollar amount of support from personal funds, family funds from abroad, and other sources of support is required for the I-20.
2. A notarized temporary custody agreement between the international exchange student's parents/guardians and the host family and/or exchange organization.
3. Evidence of health and accident insurance covering the duration of the student visa.

NOTE: Exchange students on an F-1 visa are required to pay the District for the full, unsubsidized, per capita cost to the District for providing education to the student for the period of his or her attendance.

Placement of International Exchange Students in the Schools

Only international exchange students sponsored by District-approved international exchange organizations or sponsored privately by a legal adult resident of the District, who have met the criteria outlined in the previous section, may seek admission to Fergus High School.

1. All completed applications with supporting documentation are to be submitted to the building principal by June 1 for the first (1st) semester. Enrollment commencing the second (2nd) semester will be permitted only by special approval of the building principal. Applications for the second (2nd) semester should be made by November 1 and finalized by December 1. If special circumstances require waiving these deadlines, arrangements must be made with the building principal prior to June 15.
2. All applications will be screened by the building principal.
3. An international exchange student may not be enrolled in the District without prior approval of the building principal.
4. Upon the international exchange student's arrival in Lewistown, the adult sponsor (host family and/or local representative of the exchange organization) and student must go to the school to complete the enrollment process.

International exchange students must arrive in sufficient time for attendance on the first (1st) day of school.

International Exchange Student Placement Limitations

Only a limited number of students can be afforded this opportunity, each year. Therefore:

1. Enrollment of international exchange students in Fergus High School is limited to one percent (1%) of the school's enrollment.
2. To enhance the cultural diversity brought to a school by international exchange students, no more than one (1) student of the same nationality will be accepted in each school.

3. If there is greater demand by international exchange organizations for admission of students than can be accommodated, specific limits may be given to organizations. Limitations may also be placed on new organizations and organizations approved on a conditional basis.

Status/Academic/Graduation Standards for International Exchange Students

1. International exchange students will be treated as regular students and are responsible for complying with District policies and regulations regarding attendance, academic standards, responsibilities and rights, discipline, and graduation requirements.
2. International exchange students are expected to take six (6) classes per term, including one (1) language arts/English class and one (1) American history and/or government class, and are expected to maintain passing grades in all classes.
3. High school-aged international exchange students enrolled for one (1) school year or less will be classified as juniors and will earn grades and receive credit for courses successfully completed but will not be included in the cumulative academic class ranking.
4. Should the District determine a student's practical English proficiency fails to reach acceptable levels, the student may be sent home early or be assigned a tutor, the costs to be paid by the host family.
5. Exchange students are generally not eligible to receive scholastic awards but may be eligible to receive extracurricular awards. Exceptions will be made for privately sponsored international exchange students enrolled for two (2) school years or longer and meeting all graduation requirements.
6. International exchange students are eligible to receive a Fergus High School diploma, only if they meet all graduation requirements prescribed by Board policy. It is difficult for most international exchange students enrolled for only one (1) year or less to meet these requirements, particularly the social studies and language arts requirements.
7. The eligibility requirements of the Montana High School Association will be followed.
8. International exchange students are expected to pay for all lunches, book, athletic, yearbook costs and other fees and all other school-incurred expenses expected of other students in the Lewistown Public Schools. A student activity ticket may be provided, at the discretion of the "F" Club.
9. The District will not provide international exchange students with admission to such programs as special education for handicapped pupils. Under no circumstances will the District pay tuition for international exchange students to attend other schools or institutions of higher education.

Responsibilities of Private Sponsors, Exchange Organizations, and Host Families

Private sponsors, exchange organizations, and host families are *in loco parentis* with respect to adult supervision of international exchange students. The District expects these adults to assume the following specific responsibilities:

1. The private sponsor, host family, and local coordinator for the exchange organization must maintain personal contact with the school and be available and willing to meet with school personnel when problems or situations require it.
2. If an international exchange student's English proficiency is found to be insufficient to function in the regular instructional program without special professional assistance, the exchange organization or the private sponsor must provide a tutor or make other educational arrangements for the student, at their expense, according to the student's needs.
3. The exchange organization or private sponsor must assume final responsibility for resolving problems, including, if necessary, the early return home of the international exchange student because of personal, family, or school difficulties which cannot be resolved.
4. If school officials deem an international exchange student's grades, attendance, and/or behavior unsatisfactory, the student may be withdrawn from school, and the United States Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, will immediately be advised.

Suspension, Revocation, or Dismissal

Exchange organizations, private sponsors, host families, and/or international exchange students found to be in violation of any of the Fergus High School policies and regulations are subject to having their relationship with the District terminated.

Policy History:

Adopted on: June 28, 2004

Revised on: