

The Watauga County Board of Education embraces the cultural diversity that foreign exchange students bring to the school system. Foreign exchange students expose the school community to new perspectives and customs, facilitate cross-cultural understanding, and prepare all students for a future with increasing global interconnectivity. Foreign exchange students may be accepted for admission into the school system only through approved foreign exchange student programs in accordance with this policy.

A. APPROVAL OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENT PROGRAMS

The superintendent or designee may approve a foreign exchange student program upon receipt of documentation that the program:

1. has met the standards established by the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET) and appears on the current CSIET J-1 Advisory List;
2. has a local representative residing in or in close proximity to the geographical area served by the school system; and
3. has educational goals and operating procedures compatible with those of the school system.

The superintendent or designee may revoke the approval of any program that does not maintain compliance with the requirements of this policy and any accompanying administrative procedures.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENT PROGRAMS

Approved foreign exchange student programs will be responsible for facilitating all matters associated with the exchange, including, but not limited to:

1. screening and selecting students who are suitable for the program;
2. ensuring that the student has fulfilled all requirements for entry into the United States on a J-1 visa;
3. assuming all financial and legal responsibility for the student;
4. assuming responsibility for all matters associated with the student's living arrangements, such as selecting and orienting the student's host family and providing ongoing support for the host family and student;
5. preparing the student for the exchange, orienting the student to the community and the school system, monitoring the student's progress throughout the school year,

and responding to any issues that may arise; and

6. communicating with the student's principal or designee, including providing the principal or designee with written notification of (1) any changes related to the host family or the foreign exchange student program's local representative and (2) any need to transfer academic credit back to the student's school of origin and the process for doing so.

C. ADMISSION OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Foreign exchange student applications must be submitted to the superintendent or designee by July 31 prior to the school year in which the student wishes to enroll. The applications will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. Foreign exchange students may be admitted for either a year-long course of study or a semester course of study. Tuition will be waived for all foreign exchange students admitted into the school system pursuant to this policy.

The board may admit a foreign exchange student only if the following conditions are met.

1. The student's admission application must be complete and include:
 - a. the host family's name and address, which must be located within the geographic area served by the school system;
 - b. the student's current official transcript translated in English;
 - c. results of a recent physical examination and proof of required immunizations translated in English;
 - d. proof of insurance for accident and medical coverage;
 - e. a copy of any special rules or requirements of the foreign exchange program; and
 - f. any other information or forms required by the school system.
2. The student must have adequate command of the English language, as measured by a nationally normed English language assessment, to function in a regular classroom. The student's English language ability must be documented as part of the application process.
3. The student must not have previously attended school in the United States in either F-1 or J-1 visa status. Students will not be accepted as transfers from any other school system in the United States.
4. The student must possess a valid J-1 visa prior to attending school.

5. The board must have determined that space is available at the school to which the student will be assigned. Generally, school assignment will be based on the address of the student's host family. If a different school assignment is approved, the host family must agree to provide the student transportation to and from school. Foreign exchange students will not be permitted to transfer schools after initial enrollment.

D. SELECTION OF COURSES AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Each school that enrolls foreign exchange students will designate a faculty member to act as the Foreign Exchange Student Advisor serving as a liaison between each foreign exchange student and the school. The Foreign Exchange Student Advisor will facilitate the selection of the student's courses and extracurricular activities in consultation with the foreign exchange student program's local representative, the host family, school personnel, and the student.

Students will be allowed to participate in interscholastic athletics and other extracurricular activities if they meet all applicable eligibility requirements (see policy 3620, Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations) and are not otherwise prohibited by restrictions of the foreign exchange student program.

As the fundamental purpose of the exchange program is cultural exchange, foreign exchange students are not eligible to receive diplomas. Students who were enrolled as 12th graders may participate in high school graduation exercises and associated ceremonies and be awarded honorary certificates.

The superintendent or designee shall develop any necessary administrative procedures to implement this policy.

Legal References: Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended, Public Law 87-256, 22 U.S.C. 2451, *et seq.*; 22 C.F.R. Part 62

Cross References: Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations (policy 3620), Immunizations and Health Requirements for School Admission (policy 4110)

Adopted: July 11, 2024

Replaces: Board policy 4134 Admission of foreign Exchange Students