

HOW TO SET UP STUDENT EXCHANGES

There is no question about it - first-hand experience of different cultures provides numerous benefits to your students:

- promotes a deeper understanding and appreciation of the host culture;
- provides vital opportunities to develop language skills in a real-life context;
- sparks an interest in learning the language of the host country;
- enriches students' personal lives - exchanges are fun.

Because Japan is so different from Canada, it is particularly useful to use exchanges as a way to enrich classroom learning. In some jurisdictions, credit may be offered for participation in an exchange.

Where exchanges are reciprocal, other students, parents and members of the community have an opportunity to share in the experience when students from Japan arrive in Canada. This can bolster community support for your programs. Exchanges can also provide opportunities for teacher, trustee and administrator participation.

Reciprocal School-based Exchanges

Most school-based exchanges flow from a twinning arrangement with a school in Japan. This longer-term relationship provides for easier organization of exchanges and for an optimal match of students.

Please refer to the preceding chapter or help in setting up twinings.

Similarly, most exchanges are short-term visits, but some have evolved to include longer visits for students who are especially interested in Japan. In some cases, students may spend three-months in the host country; in other cases, year-long exchanges have emerged with special intensive courses in Japanese and English being offered at the host-country high schools.

If you are twinned with a school, you will be making arrangements with your counterpart. However, you will still need to give thought to the following:

- Most exchanges are based on home-stay programs. Will your students and parents agree to that type of arrangement, both for your students while they are in Japan and for provision of lodging for the Japanese students while in Canada?
- Decisions will be required as to the nature of the activities underpinning the exchange. There may be a special event or events such as concerts or sports competitions. Beyond that, will the Japanese students be attending classes at your school? Have you thought of arranging some special English-as-a-Second-Language classes or classes on Canadian culture? Are you planning special sight-seeing trips and/or community activities? Is there a special interest in areas such as the environment or culture that calls for visits to appropriate sites?
- What type of arrangements have been made for the teachers or officials accompanying the students? A visit to a local college or university, Faculty of Education, Board or Ministry/Department of Education offices might be interesting for them along with the more general visits.
- With respect to your visit abroad, you will want to consider the nature of any extra trips you want to make outside of the exchange framework.
- Exchanges require a lot of commitment, time, organization and money. It is important to ensure sufficient resources are available. You will need to consider how funds will be raised, not only for travel to/from and within Japan for Canadian