

**FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENT PROGRAM**  
**REGULATIONS**

1. Sponsoring organizations must be non-profit organizations or institutions officially designated by the United States State Department as an Exchange Visitor Program.
2. Procedural clearance for student enrollment must be finalized through the Guidance, ESOL, and Instructional Services, at least fifteen (15) working days, **before the exchange student's arrival to the United States** (School Board Policy 5013)
3. Sponsoring organizations are responsible for student placement:
  - a. With the host family.
  - b. With the schools. Contact Pupil Accounting at (863)534-0718 for the designated school or at [www.polk-fl.net](http://www.polk-fl.net)
4. Sponsoring organizations must assume responsibility for the student's health, safety, and legal obligations.
5. Sponsoring organizations must assure that no more than five (5) students, from their organization, will be enrolled in the same school.
6. Communication regarding a prospective foreign exchange student must be between the District Guidance office, the school and the sponsoring organization representative and **not** with the host family.
7. Students must be in high school (grade 9-12), be at least 15 years of age, but not over 18.5.
8. Students **must not** request or require a high school diploma of graduation.
9. The exchange student who is a high school graduate or equivalent (General Education Equivalency diploma or similar document) from the country of origin must be cleared for the program by the appropriate Area Superintendent and the Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction/Student Support or designee. The Guidance, ESOL, and Instructional Services department redirects these applications to the appropriate departments.
10. Students must **not** have previously participated in an academic year or semester as an exchange student. Students are expected to be in the program for one (1) academic year or one (1) semester. There is no summer school placement.
11. rules, regulations, and policies for all students also apply to foreign exchange students. In accordance with CSJET Standard 6D.b.2, organizations shall provide the school district with the student's level of English proficiency.
12. Exchange students and a member of the host family must meet with the school principal or designee to finalize class schedules prior to entering school.
13. Prior to student clearance, it is the responsibility of the local representative of the sponsoring organization to provide a copy of each of the required documents, listed on the *Checklist of Required documents*, to the Guidance, ESOL, and Instructional Services.
14. As you are aware, current Exchange Visitor Program regulations require sponsors to secure prior written acceptance for the enrollment of any student participant placed in a United States public or private secondary school. In addition, the

- State Department has adopted final placement dates of August 23<sup>1</sup> and January 15 that coincide with the placement report deadlines.
- i. Such prior acceptance shall be secured from the Guidance, ESOL, and Instructional Services department.
  - ii. Under no circumstances shall a sponsor facilitate the entry into the United States of a student for whom a school placement has not been secured.
15. Sponsors may not place more than one exchange student with a host family without the express prior written consent of the department of State. Under no circumstances may more than two exchange students be placed with one host family.
  16. Prior to the student's departure from their home country, sponsors shall secure a **single** host family placement for each student participant for the period of enrollment in the school system.
  17. In the event of unforeseen circumstances, which necessitate a change of host family placement, the sponsor shall **document** the reason requiring such change and provide this to the Guidance, ESOL, and Instructional Services department.
  18. The School Board reserves the right to work with, or not work with, exchange organizations that have proved, or not proved, their commitment and responsiveness.
  19. A background check for each member of the host family household, eighteen years of age and older, and the local representative needs to be completed and included in the packet.
  20. Sponsors of the foreign exchange organizations are responsible for submitting all required documentation for their foreign exchange students. Fraudulent documents may result in termination of the student's enrollment in Polk County Schools.

NOTE: The School Board of Polk County reserves the right to deny any and all foreign exchange student applications, for whatever reason deemed appropriate by the Board, so long as the reason for the denial is not based on the applicant's race, color, sex, religion, or nationality.

### **FOREIGN STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

The school board of Polk County, Florida, encourages participation in foreign student exchange programs. Youth exchange programs provide exchange students with an American experience, giving them a more balanced understanding of our country. These programs encourage new perspectives for the school's own students that open their minds to the world. More importantly, their "connections" help teenagers on both sides of exchange grow and gain maturity (CSIET)

## **RULES**

### **A. DEFINITIONS**

1. **Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET)** is an organization that sets standards for international youth exchange programs; monitors organizations' compliance with CSIET Standards; publishes the results of the evaluation process in the *Advisory List* throughout the educational community. CSIET is endorsed by the United States Department of State.
2. **Sponsoring Organization** is a non-profit organization offering international educational and cultural youth exchange experiences through their programs.
3. **Sponsor** is the person from the participating foreign exchange student organization who undertakes responsibility for the recruitment, placement and overseeing the local, organization representative of the foreign exchange student for the student's entire exchange experience.
4. **Foreign Exchange Student** is a foreign national secondary student who has been selected by a sponsor of a youth exchange organization, to participate for up to one year of study in a United States public or private secondary school, while living with an American host family or residing at an accredited U.S. boarding school, and who is seeking to enter, or has entered, the United States temporarily on a J-1 VISA.
5. **Local Organization Representative** is the person from the participating foreign exchange student program/organization that lives within 120 miles of the foreign exchange student; authorized to act on the sponsor's behalf in both routine and emergency matters arising from the student's participation in their exchange program.

### **B. FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENTS ENTERING A POLK COUNTY SCHOOL**

1. Only organizations with tax-exempt status as conferred by the Internal Revenue Service pursuant to section 501 ( c ) (3), and organizations that are listed officially with the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET), may sponsor a foreign exchange student program in the Polk county School District.
2. The designated sponsoring organization shall assume responsibility for the student's health, safety and legal obligations.
3. The exchange student shall gain legal entry into the United States as certified with a J-1 Exchange visa, which includes clearance by Homeland Security or the appropriate government agency, be a high school (grades 9-12 or the equivalent) student, and shall present documented proof with a birth certificate or passport, showing that he/she will be at least fifteen (15) years of age, but not have attained the age of eighteen and a half (18.5), prior to attendance at the Polk school.
4. The exchange student shall not, as a condition of enrollment, request or require a diploma of graduation from Polk County Schools. International exchange students have all rights and responsibilities accorded to Polk County Schools students except the right to a diploma.

- 5.** The exchange student who is a high school graduate or equivalent (General Education Equivalency diploma or similar document) from the country or origin must be cleared for the program by the appropriate Area Superintendent and the Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction/Student support or designee.
- 6.** To be eligible for enrollment in a Polk County school, the local organization representative, from the sponsoring organization, of the foreign exchange student shall provide documented evidence of the following:

  - (a)** The named host family that has pledged to provide housing for the student during the period of enrollment in the school system.
  - (b)** Health, accident, and liability insurance that is valid in the United States
  - (c)** Immunization in accordance with Florida statutes prior to the student's first day of attendance in a Polk County public school.
  - (d)** A written statement indicating who is responsible for the affected student in case of emergency.
  - (e)** Evidence of sufficient English language proficiency, including reading, writing and speaking, that will enable the student to successfully function at the academic level in which he/she is enrolled. It is not the district's responsibility to provide any form of special tutorial help in English proficiency, therefore, foreign exchange students are not eligible for ESOL services nor are they eligible for tutoring or other special services. Evidence may be one or more of the following.

    - (i)** Written attestation by an official of the student's home school, or of the American Embassy in the student's home country, or by an American citizen in the student's home country who has taught the student in an academic capacity.
    - (ii)** Submission by the student of a letter in his/her own handwriting in English and a micro-cassette tape recording of his/her voice speaking and reading English.
  - (f)** A written statement from the sponsoring organization or student's home school indicating that the student has not received a high school diploma from his/her country of origin.
  - (g)** Valid transcript from the student's sending school, which includes the criteria for translating foreign grades into an English comparison.
- 7.** Prior to the student's arrival in the United States, the sponsor shall secure provisional placement at a Polk County High School.
- 8.** Sponsors of student exchange organizations shall secure, prior to the student's departure from their home country, a host family placement for each student participant.

  - (a)** Sponsors shall not facilitate the entry into the United States for the student for whom a host family placement has not been secured.
  - (b)** Sponsor shall not place more than one student with a host family without the express prior written consent of the U.S. Department of State.

(c) Sponsors will make no student placement outside 120-mile radius of the home of a local, organization representative authorized to act on the sponsor's behalf in both the routine and emergency matters arising from the student's participation in the exchange programs.

(d) Sponsors will ensure that no local, organization representative act as both host family and area supervisor. [ U.S. Department of State 62.26 (k)(li)]

**9.** In the event of unforeseen circumstances that necessitate a change of host family placement, the sponsor shall document the reasons necessitating such change and provide this information to the District guidance Department, [ U.S. Department of State 62.26. (3)]

**10.** Procedural clearance for enrollment in a Polk school must be finalized not less than 15 workdays prior to the student's departure from the country of origin. If subsequent documentation indicates that such procedural clearance was not finalized within the required timeframe, the exchange student shall not be admitted to a Polk County school. Requests for procedural clearance submitted from any designated sponsor after the required fifteen (15) workday periods shall not be honored.

**11.** Initial request for enrollment from the sponsoring organization's local representative must be accompanied by the required documentation listed in Rule # 5 and the local organization representative's signature verifying that they have complied with all United States Department of State regulations for secondary school student exchange programs {652.25} and CSJET Standards.

**12.** The Superintendent, or his/her designee shall approve the admission of each exchange student.

**13.** Upon receiving procedural clearance, the student may register at the appropriate high school, which shall be designated as the school within the regular school attendance boundary of the host family's residence.

**14.** The code of Student Conduct of the Polk County School Board that applies to all students shall be adhered to by the exchange student and follow enrollment procedures as prescribed by Policy 5.1 (Enrollment and Withdrawal) as well as the high school the student will attend.

**15.** As required by the U.S. Department of State, a background check must be completed by the sponsoring organization for each member of the host family household, eighteen years of age or older, and for the local organization representative of the organization.

**16.** The School Board of Polk County reserves the right to work with foreign exchange organizations that have proven their commitment and responsiveness.

**C. POLK COUNTY STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN A FOREIGN EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

**1.** Polk County students who participate in foreign exchange student programs shall be withdrawn from their home school in the United States.

**2.** Upon application for re-enrollment in the Polk County School, the student shall present an official transcript from the foreign school attended, and this will be evaluated by the receiving high school.

**FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENT PROGRAM**  
**LIST OF REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

**I. Submit to the Instructional Services Department.**

The local representative of the sponsoring organization must submit the following documents to the Instructional Service department before a foreign student is eligible and approved for enrollment as a foreign exchange in a Polk County.

1. Proof that the sponsoring organization is a designated Foreign Exchange Student Program on the current CSIET Advisory List.
2. INS J-1 Exchange visa.
3. Student application (photocopy).
4. Evidence of sufficient English language:
  - i. Written confirmation by home school, American Embassy, or English teacher residing in home country, or
  - ii. Handwritten student letter, or
  - iii. Cassette tape recording of student reading and speaking in English.
5. A written statement verifying that the student has/does not have a high school diploma.
6. Host family application.
7. A written pledge from host family to provide student housing for the duration of the student's enrollment (must include time frame).
8. A written verification of completion of a background check for each member of the host family household 18 years and older, AND the organization's local representative (on the sponsoring organization's letterhead).
9. Verification of insurance (insurance card or policy).
10. Data Collection Sheet.

**II. Required Signature**

**I, \_\_\_\_\_, verify that all required documentation listed in Section I. are enclosed and submitted to the Instructional Service Department and that all U.S. Department of State regulations and CSIET standards have been met.**

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Title\_\_\_\_\_ Organization\_\_\_\_\_

**III. Submit to the High School**

Upon approval by the Instructional Services Department for enrollment as a Polk County Public School foreign exchange student, the following documents must be presented at the time of enrollment:

1. Florida Certificate of Immunization Form (DH 680 form) and evidence of a medical examination performed within 12 months prior to enrollment.
2. Host family proof of residence as living within the school boundary (two pieces).
3. Birth certificate or passport in order to certify age of student.
4. Valid transcripts in English.
5. Criteria for translating foreign grades to the United States System.
6. Photocopy of Data collection Sheet.