

# Frequently Asked Questions

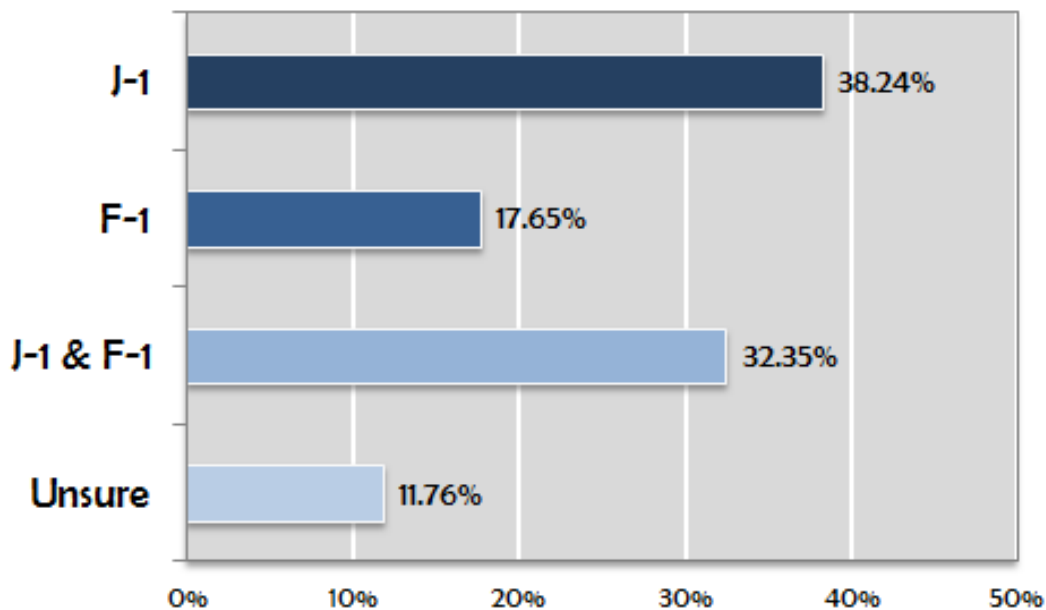
## to U.S. Schools from International Exchange Programs

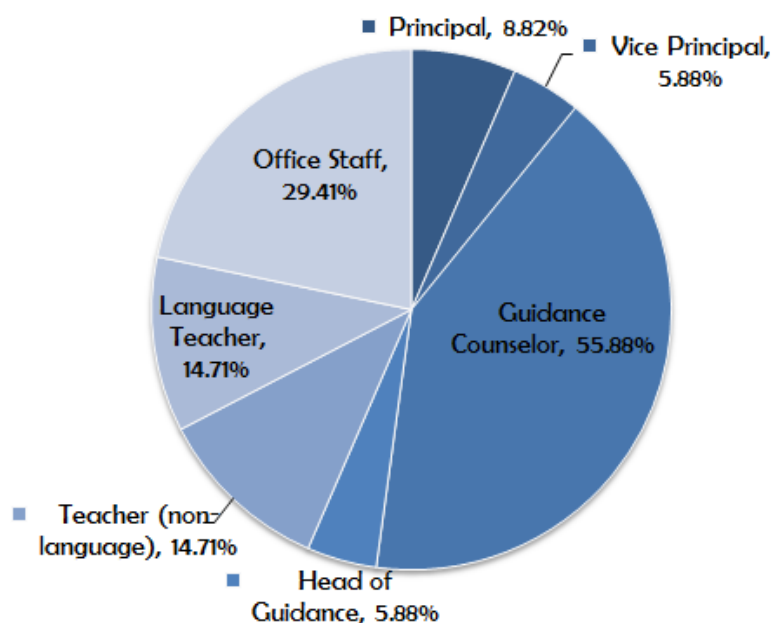


These FAQs are intended to assist exchange programs in supporting U.S. schools as they introduce and integrate international students into their communities. With valuable input from individual high school administrators, The Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET)'s *Education Outreach Committee* developed this material as a resource for exchange programs on how to best to work with schools and, in turn, encourage every U.S. school to engage in international youth exchange.

CSIET is a national non-profit organization committed to quality international educational travel and exchange for youth at the high school level.

### 1. On what kind of visa are the international students at your school studying?



**2. Who primarily works with international students at your school?****3. Why does your school choose to enroll international students?**

Some of the primary reasons that schools choose to enroll international students are to create diversity, foster appreciation and awareness for other cultures, welcome new financial opportunity, and bring global education to classrooms in a tangible way.

**4. What do you hope these students will contribute to your school community?**

Schools welcome international students with the hope that they will: experience American culture and share their first-hand experiences when they return home; help American students gain new global perspectives and create friendships with students from around the world; and, most importantly, promote intercultural awareness and understanding for a more peaceful world.

**5. How should exchange programs request permission to enroll international students at your school?**

Primary contacts and preferred contact methods vary from school to school. To begin the enrollment process, the exchange program should contact the school directly; asking who amongst the faculty coordinates and enrolls international students. The exchange program should then reach out to that person to introduce the program and begin the enrollment process. Schools encourage in-person visits when possible, however phone calls and emails will also suffice.

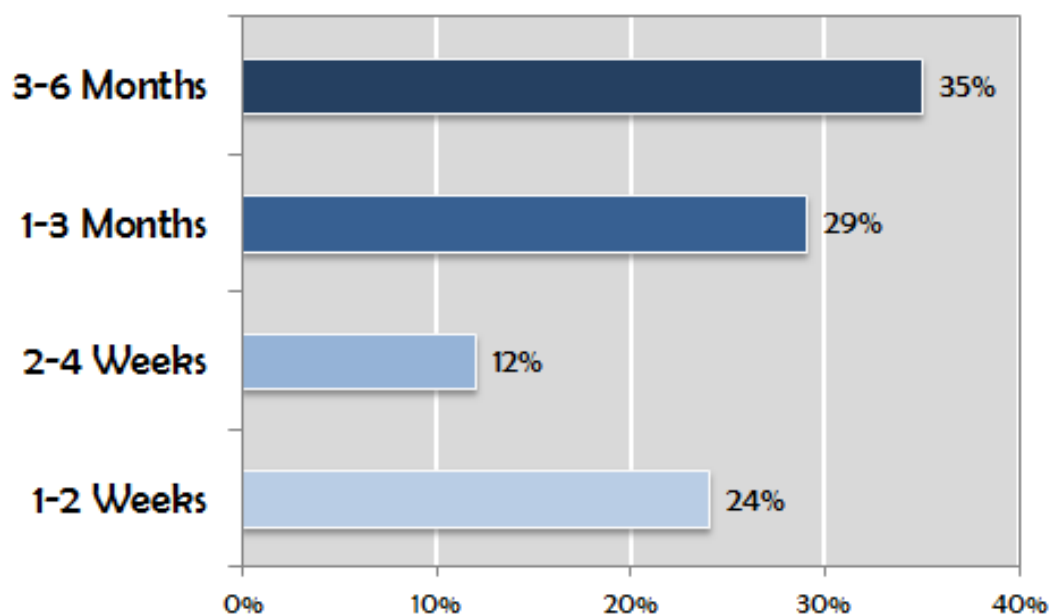
## 6. What is your school's deadline for accepting international students? (If rolling please specify.)

School enrollment deadlines differ depending on regional and state restrictions. Because schools report such a wide variety of deadlines spanning the calendar year, exchange program representatives should ask school contacts about particular deadlines as early as possible so as to incorporate them into their calendars.

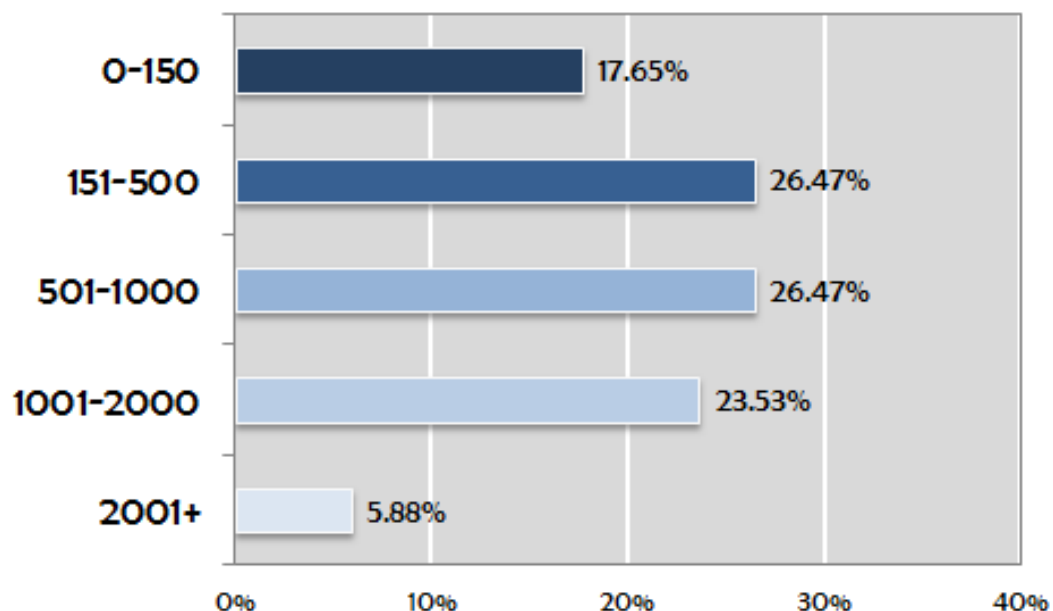
Some schools name a single date as their deadline while others indicate a date range during which they accept students. Many schools mention that they will accept students until their final deadline or until the school's quota for that year has been met, whichever comes first.

The key is to contact school personnel as early as possible, being mindful of each school's deadline. In general, schools frown upon exchange programs requesting enrollment in the week prior to the school start date and certainly after school is already in session. This can put schools in a difficult situation which may tax their relationship with the exchange program.

## 7. How far in advance of your deadline should exchange programs contact you about enrolling international students?



Many schools prefer that exchange programs contact them to request enrollment as early as possible in order to develop a clear relationship, set expectations, and minimize confusion before students begin traveling.

**8. Approximately how many students, total, are enrolled at your school?****9. Approximately how many international students does your school accept each year? What is the rationale for this quota?**

International student acceptance rates vary between schools. While some schools are limited by a fixed percentage or quota for the number of international students they are willing or able to accept, others have no limitations. Some schools are unable to accept any international students at all. The primary reasons behind school acceptance restrictions are: student-teacher ratios, inadequate ESL or additional language support, high existing diversity ratio, lack of economic reimbursement for costs incurred by international students, insufficient community support, and a shortage of quality host families.

**10. Is there anything exchange programs could do (that is not financial in nature) to enable schools to accept more international students?**

Exchange programs can provide more accurate information about the students they wish to enroll so that schools can ensure that students they accept are well equipped to face the challenges of an exchange program. Programs can also secure high-quality host families for students earlier in the year and ask for school input in the host family approval process to ensure a successful placement. Finally, programs can further motivate schools to accept students by offering workshops, professional development opportunities, and/or information sessions for faculty (at schools that are willing to accept international students) to create successful, lasting partnerships.

**12. What poses the greatest difficulty for schools when hosting international students?**

The most common issues schools reportedly encounter while hosting international students are related to the following: finding and retaining quality host families (if school is involved in this process), students' English proficiency skills, scheduling conflicts and class space, meeting course requirements, accommodating credit transfers to students' native schools, and general cultural adjustments.

Issues are avoided or managed best when exchange programs provide thorough and accurate information to schools about the students they are enrolling (English language skills, maturity level, grade level, etc). Schools also appreciate a clear plan (presented by the exchange program representative at the beginning of the school year) for communication and management of potential issues that could arise throughout the year.

**10. How might an exchange program convince a school administrator who is not interested in international youth exchange that hosting international students would be valuable to the student body and community?**

School administrators express the most resistance to enrolling international students when they aren't provided adequate, accurate information about the sponsor exchange program, the students, and what is required of a host school. An exchange program should provide information about its student screening and host family recruitment and selection process, as well as an outline of the support that their program offers to students, families, and schools.

Schools want specific examples about how international students can enrich school communities and positively impact their peers (such as a video, literature, or community service report). The School Board, Community leaders and PTA organizations also have considerable influence in acceptance decisions so delivering presentations to these groups is a way exchange programs can gain additional support and leverage before meeting with the school administrator.

**13. What have you seen work/not work with regard to host families for international students?**

The most common issues related to host family placements are: unrealistic, misguided expectations prior to student arrival, lack of host family involvement with student and community, general personality conflicts, unpreparedness, insufficient ongoing support for families on the part of the exchange programs, transportation challenges related to location, and failure to overcome cultural differences. Schools suggest that exchange programs provide more orientations and preparation for families prior to hosting, encourage host family and student involvement with school and community activities, and promote open, transparent communication between family, student, and school throughout the program's duration.

**14. What are red flags that will prevent a school from accepting a student?**

School administrators will typically be wary of enrolling students whose: English proficiency scores and grade point averages are low; references from teachers at their native schools are less-than-positive; credits will not transfer once the student returns home; application suggests a lack of interest in achieving academic success during the exchange year; or if the student only seems interested in the social aspects of the program. Some schools may avoid accepting younger students, preferring students who are more mature and adjusted. Other schools may be seeking students of particular nationalities or students who have achieved minimum English test scores or GPAs. Learning the school's requirements as early as possible in the enrollment process can help prevent issues later in the program year.

**15. What support would/does your school need from exchange programs in order to host international students with disabilities?**

Exchange programs should provide schools with accurate and detailed information about the student's disability, including what the student is capable of doing on his or her own and what additional support the student will need. Schools may be hesitant to accept a student with a disability if additional financial and staffing accommodations will be required. Schools that already have the necessary support and resources in place are typically better equipped to accommodate these students. Schools are also more willing to accept students with disabilities if the sponsor exchange program has experience supporting students with similar disabilities in the past.

**16. How can exchange programs support school administrators and staff in order to ease the process of placing students with disabilities and ensure that these students are offered equal opportunity to participate in exchange programs in the U.S.?**

Schools are required by law to provide accommodations for every student. This can be a complicated and expensive process but many schools will work with exchange programs to ensure successful placements. Schools are more likely to work with exchange programs that possess in-depth knowledge about the requirements for supporting disabled students and that coordinate additional support for these students up front. Schools also encourage exchange programs to place disabled students with host families who are experienced working with disabled persons or who have knowledge of the system, so that those host families can serve as an additional advocates and support resources throughout the program.

**17. What are the vaccination requirements in your state?**

For state-by-state vaccination requirements, please visit: <http://www.vaccineinformation.org/state-immunization-programs/>

**18. Do natural parents ever contact school personnel directly?**

At times, international students' natural parents will call the school directly to discuss their child's academic performance, course schedule, or disciplinary issues. Schools, however, prefer that natural parents communicate their concerns to the exchange program who should then address these matters with the school. Most schools discourage direct communication with natural parents and in situations where this does occur, appreciate the exchange program's leadership in addressing the matter.

**19. Do school personnel ever find it difficult placing international students in the appropriate math class? Does the move from one math class to another complicate a student's schedule?**

School personnel are usually flexible and willing to adjust a student's schedule until he/she is comfortable in each of his/her classes. Schools encourage students and exchange program representatives to meet with the guidance department or scheduling office at the beginning of each semester to create a class schedule that's appropriate to the student's ability and that fulfills program requirements.

**20. How does the school encourage and promote friendships between international students and American students?**

Schools encourage international students to join extracurricular activities such as sports teams, academic clubs, band, chorus, and volunteer groups where they can meet students with similar interests in a structured, interactive environment. Schools also encourage international students to deliver presentations in their classes or at school assemblies to introduce themselves to their peers, share information about their home country and culture, as well as to encourage cross-cultural questions and dialogue.

School Personnel Testimonials

**How do you believe that hosting international students and sending your students abroad fosters global competency and 21st century teaching and learning at your school?**

**"In every aspect! Exposure to different cultures, lifestyles, languages, hobbies, life experiences, etc."**

**"It brings the world to our school, which changes everything."**

"In a small school, statistically we do not have many top students, but we have increased the changes with international students. This raises the academic bar in the classroom. It also prepares our students for global competency and 21st C learning skills."



"Eliminates the us-them dichotomy and makes international diplomacy more personal."

"We find that foreign exchange students coming here are usually more advanced in math which is good for our students."

"I believe the exposure to different cultures broadens the students' perspective of the world. Living in the Midwest, we are pretty sheltered from a lot of things, for the good and the bad of it."

*"It gives students a global perspective and forces them to use critical thinking skills and creativity. It helps them learn to adapt to change."*

**"World peace will come from understanding other cultures and making international friendships."**