

International Exchange

Frequently Asked Questions

The following information is provided to help support students and their families, as well as school and district administrators, in navigating available resources for international student exchange programs.

What does it mean to be an international student exchange visitor in the state of Washington?

An international student exchange visitor is any person eighteen years of age or under, who enters the United States with a nonimmigrant Visa, in a public or private high school (or up to age twenty-one if enrolled or to be enrolled in high school in this state) and is placed by an international student exchange visitor placement organization. (Reference: [RCW 19.166.020](#))

What is the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) role with student exchange?

OSPI believes that student exchanges can be an enriching experience for individual students and their families, as well as schools and districts. OSPI cannot sponsor or coordinate student exchanges.

Who can sponsor student exchanges in Washington State?

Student exchanges are sponsored by private international student exchange visitor placement organizations registered with the Secretary of State's office. For more information please visit the [Secretary of State's Web site](#).

What does it mean to be an International Student Exchange Visitor Placement Organization?

It is a person, partnership, corporation, or other entity that regularly arranges the placement of international student exchange visitors for the purpose of allowing the student an opportunity to attend school in the United States. (Reference: [RCW 19.166.020](#))

Who do I work with to coordinate a student exchange?

In addition to working directly with an "international student exchange visitor placement organization" registered with the Secretary of State's office, interested persons should work directly with their local school district office.



Washington is considered a "local control" state. This means that each of the 295 school districts makes its own decisions, including those decisions related to the enrollment of international and exchange students. Many school districts throughout Washington State have student exchange programs in place, while others may not.

Please contact your local school district office to learn more. For a list of Washington school districts please visit the [OSPI School District Web sites page](#).

For a list of International Student Exchange Visitor Placement Organizations registered with the Secretary of State's office, review the [Secretary of State's List of Approved International Student Exchange Organizations](#).

How does my district go about developing a student exchange program?

The [Council on Standards for International Educational Travel \(CSIET\)](#) provides information on standards for international student exchange.

- [CSIET Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [School Resources](#)

Must a visiting student pay tuition to attend school in Washington State?

As with enrollment decisions, it is a local control decision for school districts to charge tuition. However, if an exchange student wishes to attend public high school (grades 9-12) in the United States in student (F-1) status, he/she must submit evidence, to the U.S. Department of State, that the local school district has been reimbursed in advance for the unsubsidized per capita cost of the education.

What type of Visa is needed to attend school in Washington State?

There are three types of nonimmigrant Visas relevant to student exchange:

- F-1 Visa - Academic Students
- J-1 Visa - Exchange Visitor
- M-1 Visa - Nonacademic Student

To determine the Visa type that may be needed or for more information about studying in the U.S., please visit the [U.S. Department of State Student Visa Web page](#).

Other helpful information is available on the [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Web page](#).

What is the difference between an F-1 and an M-1 Visa?

The F-1 Visa is issued to those students who have applied for and have been accepted to study at an accredited U.S. college or university, or to study English at a university or language institute. It also includes seminaries, conservatories, and academic high schools. The M-1 Visa is issued to those students enrolled in nonacademic or vocational programs.

What is a J-1 Visa?

The J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa is issued to individuals who take part in a wide range of exchange visitor programs sponsored by schools, businesses, and a variety of organizations and institutions. These programs are envisioned for business and industrial trainees, scholars, students, international visitors, teachers, research assistants, and those on cultural missions. In addition, there are several exchange visitor programs for young people, including summer employment programs, internship programs for university students and au-pair programs.

Where can I find more information about Student Visas?

For more information about Student Visas please visit the [U.S. Department of State Web site](#).

I am a Washington Student and would like to study abroad. Where should I begin?

CSIET is a not-for-profit organization committed to quality international educational travel and exchange for youth. For more information, please visit the following links:

- Families and students: [Let's Get Started](#)
- Schools and districts: [School Resources](#)

Additional information is available by contacting any one of the following agencies/organizations:

- **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)**
ICE through its [Student and Exchange Visitor Program \(SEVP\)](#) acts as the bridge for varied government organizations that have an interest in information on foreign students.
- **U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs**
The Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs administers a variety of exchange programs for [U.S.](#) and [non-U.S.](#) secondary, undergraduate, and graduate students.
- **Washington Office of the Secretary of State**
The Washington Office of the Secretary of State, through its [International Student Exchange Agency Program \(ISEA\)](#), is the overseeing agency for all international student exchange visitor placement organizations that place students in public schools in Washington State. More information is available at the [Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs](#) website.

Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET)

CSIET is a private, not-for-profit organization whose mission is to identify reputable international youth exchange programs and to provide leadership and support to the exchange and educational communities so that youth are provided with meaningful and safe international exchange experiences.