



INTERNATIONAL Student Exchange

Sharing Lives...Sharing Worlds



Welcome

to **International
Student Exchange**

Welcome to ISE



A Message from CEO, Wayne Brewer

ISE is a proud organization committed to the goal of connecting communities and cultures across the world. Our cultural exchange program plays an important role in strengthening relations between nations by promoting a greater understanding of different cultures, languages, and beliefs.

Our exchange students today are our world leaders tomorrow. Our program instills in them a commitment to service, the importance of community and the value of education.

Our Host Families develop a greater understanding of different cultures; an exposure to the challenges that other nations face; and ultimately, a greater appreciation of what it means to be an American.

Our Schools provide a nurturing environment for our students because schools cherish opportunities to bring the lessons of their classrooms to life. In this regard, our exchange students are not only eager learners but they're also enthusiastic teachers.

Our field staff builds the bridges in their communities that connect our students with our Host Families and schools. They are mentors to the students, as well as reliable, invaluable contacts for both the Host Families and the schools.

At ISE's Headquarters, our commitment is to put the needs of our students, host families, and schools above all else. Our organization's success is due to the people that make the program possible: the schools, the families, the field staff; and their dedication, love, and care for our students. For that, we are ever thankful.

We all recognize the difficulty of our mission and the everyday challenges that we face, but the enduring belief in the promise of our program is what inspires our team to make this worthwhile endeavor possible.

Thank you for helping us make a difference!

Sincerely,

Wayne Brewer
Chief Executive Officer

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Our Mission

International Student Exchange (ISE) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to bridging cultures and connecting communities by placing high school students from around the world into the welcoming homes of volunteer host families throughout the United States. Our belief is that our exchange students today are our world leaders tomorrow. Our program instills in them a commitment to service, the importance of community and the value of education.

our Credentials

- ▶ ISE was founded in 1982 and is based in Bay Shore, New York.
- ▶ Since 1984, ISE has been officially designated as an Exchange Visitor Program by the U.S. Department of State.
- ▶ Each year, ISE sponsors J-1 Visas for nearly 3,000 foreign exchange high school students, making ISE one of the largest sponsors in the nation.
- ▶ ISE's consistent ability to provide our program participants with positive, life-changing experiences is a testament to our respect within the foreign exchange community. In recognition of our efforts, we have been granted full listing by the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET) every year since its founding.



The Application & Placement Process



Students



The application and placement process is as rigorous as it is rewarding. The process begins as a dream of our future exchange students and ends with an eager host family anxiously waiting at the airport. In between these steps, however, is a complex, interdependent network of departments that: complies with the rules of the U.S. Department of State; prioritizes the safety of our students; and, finally, ensures that our students and host families have an incredible experience!

All students participating in ISE programs travel to the US with J-1 visa sponsorship. The Exchange Visitor (J) non-immigrant visa category is for individuals approved to participate in work-and study-based exchange visitor programs. ISE is a Department of State designated sponsor of the J-1 program for secondary school students coming to study in the United States.

ISE supervises the application process and is the main point of contact throughout the exchange program process. All program participants are carefully screened based on academic performance, demeanor, and visa eligibility criteria.

Program Requirements and Eligibility Criteria

► Language Proficiency

All J-1 participants must possess sufficient proficiency in the English language to participate in their program. ISE screens all participants prior to acceptance to ensure they satisfy language proficiency requirements.

► Pre-Arrival Information

ISE field staff provides our students with pre-arrival information prior to their departure from their home countries and an orientation upon their arrival in the United States. Our field staff provides separate student and host family orientations to ensure important information is shared with all program participants in an organized, timely manner.

► Insurance

All J-1 participants are required to carry medical insurance at the minimum benefit levels stated in their program regulations. As the program sponsor, ISE ensures that all participants have the appropriate medical insurance. ISE will verify that the participant's medical insurance meets the regulatory requirements.

► Supervision

Sponsors are also required to monitor the progress and welfare of the participants for the duration of their programs. Our field staff is required to complete monthly progress reports to track each student's experiences throughout the program. They are also the main point of contact should any issues arise throughout the duration of the program. ISE provides emergency, 24-hour contact information to our students.



International Representatives



Students begin the application process by selecting an International Representative based in their country. International Representatives are independent contractors tasked with screening potential applicants and guiding them through the Student Application. ISE cooperates with over 100 independent foreign agencies from over 40 countries around the world.

The International Representative screens potential participants by reviewing their school transcripts, health records, character references, as well as their English proficiency via mandatory personal interviews. The screening process is thorough and rigorous to ensure that all approved students are not only eligible but possess the personality traits necessary to thrive in our program. We strongly encourage student applicants to be respectful, responsible, outgoing, social, and studious.

Eligible students are then guided by the international representatives in completing the student application. During this process, the international representative will also review the program options, timelines and costs.

Students are able to select amongst the following ISE program offerings:

- ▶ **Aug. – Jan Program** - is for exchange students seeking to attend American public high school for the fall semester only.
- ▶ **Jan. – Jun. Program** - is for exchange students seeking to attend American public high school for the spring semester only.
- ▶ **Academic Year Program (AYP)** - refers to the 10 months that span a typical American high school year. 10-Month AYP exchange students attend both the fall and spring semesters.
- ▶ **Pre-AYP** – is an option for AYP exchange students that want to come to the US ahead of their AYP to improve their English-speaking abilities as well as to adjust to American customs and culture. Pre-AYP programs range from one week to four weeks in duration.
- ▶ **Calendar Year Program** - is for exchange students seeking to stay a full year in the US. This program spans from January to December. *(Eligibility dependent on country.)*

International Representatives then submit completed Student Applications to ISE’s Headquarters for review. For students that are ultimately approved, International Reps conduct at least two orientation sessions designed to help the students adjust to the American school system and family life



ISE Headquarters

Students

International
Reps

ISE
Headquarters

Field Staff

Schools

Host
Families

The ISE Headquarters, based in Babylon, New York, is charged with many responsibilities, including:

- ▶ Serving as the central hub of communication between students, International Reps, schools, Host Families, and the field staff.
- ▶ Screening and reviewing of all Student and Host Family applications.
- ▶ Issuing of Form DS-2019 to all approved students needing a J-1 VISA.
- ▶ Managing, recruiting, and training of all field staff.
- ▶ Promptly addressing and resolving all student, host family, and school issues.

And most importantly...

- ▶ Ensuring that our programs are fully compliant with all Department of State Rules and Regulations.

To meet these responsibilities, ISE Headquarters is comprised of the following departments:

Our **Management Team** ensures that ISE remains the top exchange program in the industry. Strong core values in family, communication, safety and opportunity have made this possible.

Our **Facilitators** provide support for the field to help resolve student and host family issues. They are a dedicated team of professionals that operate a 24-hour hotline to immediately address emergency situations.

Our **Compliance Team** reviews all Host Family applications and school acceptance forms to ensure they are fully compliant with DOS and ISE rules and regulations.

Our **Training Department** ensures that our field staff has the proper training, support, and materials needed to successfully recruit Host Families, secure school placements, and supervise students.

Our **Marketing Department** assists the regional managers in recruiting area representatives and Host Families by launching social media, radio, & newspaper ad campaigns.

Our **Program Managers** carefully screen and review all student applications. They then directly supervise and support the field staff to ensure that all approved students are properly placed in a timely manner. Program managers are entrusted with ensuring that our field staff complies with all DOS and ISE rules and regulations.



Field Staff

Students

International
Reps

ISE
Headquarters

Field Staff

Schools

Host
Families

Once student applications are approved we move into the placement process. Our field staff, composed of Regional Managers, Regional Advisors and Area Representatives, are tasked with placing our students into the homes of volunteer host families and into the classrooms of public high schools. After placements are finalized, the field staff supervises the students and host families to ensure the program is an enjoyable, rewarding experience.

Our 40+ Regional Managers recruit, train and supervise regional advisors and Area Reps to ensure the placement of students within their regions. Their overriding responsibility is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of each student by complying with all DOS and ISE rules and regulations.

In some regions, Regional Managers have Regional Advisors that assist with the training and recruitment of Area Reps as well as the supervision of their students.

Area Reps place students into local, accredited public high schools; recruit qualified, volunteer Host Families; and supervise each of their students. Area Reps are the primary point of contact for students and Host Families regarding any issues or concerns related to the program.





Schools



Schools play a vital role in our programs. Our field staff works diligently to abide by the rules and policies of our partner public high schools. Our successful school partnerships are maintained by open, ongoing communication and support. ISE is extremely grateful for schools that allow our students to enroll and attend their classes. Accordingly, we're more than willing to demonstrate that their interests, as well as those of the students and host families, are our main priorities.

School relationships begin when our field staff engages with the schools of their communities and establishes a primary point of contact. ISE then works with our school liaisons to acquire their placement policies, enrollment deadlines, semester start dates and end dates, as well as any specific policies related to exchange programs.

For the school's benefit, we also provide the student's documentation, including the student application, transcript, and health records.

When schools are willing to accept our students, a school administrator needs to sign our School Acceptance Forms. These executed forms finalize the placement process with the school.

After placement, we then encourage our field staff to accompany our students for their initial registration. The school must be aware of our commitment and dedication to the success of our students' programs. Successful students = happy schools!

ISE currently places students into thousands of schools across the country and our school liaisons, from principals to school boards, from guidance counselors to foreign language teachers, are all essential in ensuring that our students are provided with both an excellent education and an amazing experience!





Host Families



Our field staff is tasked with the recruitment of qualified, volunteer host families. Like our student application process, potential host families are thoroughly vetted and screened. Our field staff conducts home visits, interviews, reference and criminal background checks. We always want to ensure that our students are placed into the homes of loving, outgoing, and responsible families. Host families are supported by our field staff to address any issues and to serve as a reliable resource.

Approved families are given proper orientations, informative handbooks outlining our program’s rules and regulations, as well as the contact information of our headquarters’ support hotline.

Host families are encouraged to treat our students as members of the family rather than as guests. In turn, our students are encouraged to act like members of the family, from completing household chores to celebrating holidays. Host families should be active participants in the student’s after school life, encouraging them to try out for sports teams, join clubs and to pursue extracurricular activities.

For host families, this program is not about providing our students with simple room and board, but to provide a caring, nurturing environment. Our programs are just as life changing for host families as they are to our exchange students.

Giving Back



Project HELP

Project HELP, is an ISE initiative that provides our students and field staff with the opportunity to participate and volunteer in local community events.

Every year, our exchange students, host families and field staff participate in volunteer projects across the country. Each year, our students complete more than 30,000 hours of volunteering!

Through Project HELP, ISE is able to express our gratitude to all of the communities that host our exchange students. Additionally, Project HELP fulfills one of ISE's core beliefs, to instill the value of volunteerism into our future leaders of tomorrow!

Through Project HELP, our students have volunteered at soup kitchens, food and clothing drives, disaster relief projects, senior centers, as well as school and faith-based events and much, much more!

- H:** Health and Human Issues
- E:** Environment, Education and Emergencies
- L:** Local events, Festivals and Needs
- P:** Politics, National Programs and NGO's



