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FOREIGN EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

At a Glance

High school foreign exchange programs are gaining in popularity because of their ability to enhance students' international awareness and respect for diversity in an increasingly global community. This Information Capsule summarizes the benefits of high school foreign exchange programs and reviews research conducted on their impact on students' foreign language acquisition and personal and intercultural development. Guidelines for school districts to follow when accepting foreign exchange students or encouraging their own students to study abroad are provided. In addition, some of the more popular foreign exchange programs operating within the U.S. are briefly described.

High school foreign exchange programs allow students to live and study in a country other than their own, usually for one full school year or one academic semester. Students live with a host family and attend a local school to learn another language and a new culture. The goal of most foreign exchange programs is to help enhance students' international awareness and respect for diversity in an increasingly global community. Many programs do not require an actual exchange of individual students between different countries on a one-to-one basis. In these cases, the exchange consists of foreign students and host communities sharing their respective cultures with each other (Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, 2009; Boyd et al., 2001; Lutterman-Aguilar, 2000).

No official data are available on the number of high school students participating in foreign exchange programs worldwide, although there are estimated to be tens of thousands of high school students traveling abroad on exchange programs each year (Rotary International, 2009; AFS Intercultural Programs, 2005). However, the U.S. Department of State reported that over 29,000 foreign exchange students from 109 different countries attended American high schools in 2007 (Voice of America, 2008).

Benefits of Foreign Exchange Programs

Because students participating in high school foreign exchange programs are at a relatively impressionable age, most experts believe such programs provide them with major long-term benefits, including (Youth for Understanding, 2009; Issenmann, 2008; Two Worlds United Educational Foundation, 2007; Richardson, 2003; Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, 2002; Boyd et al., 2001; Sumka, 1999; Craig, 1998; Bachner & Zeuschel, 1994; Loew, 1980):

- learning first hand about other cultures and customs;
- developing a cross-cultural perspective of the world and the ability to recognize and appreciate cultural differences;

- increased fluency in another language;
- the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with people living in a different country;
- reducing stereotypes and societal prejudices;
- experiencing personal growth, including increased self-confidence, independence, and problem-solving skills; and
- gaining college and career advantages, as colleges often give preference to students who have studied abroad and many employers seek graduates who have a global perspective.

Research on Foreign Exchange Programs

The majority of studies examining the impact of foreign exchange programs have focused on college and university students. These studies have concluded that participation in foreign exchange programs results in increased foreign language proficiency, greater interpersonal skills development, and more positive attitudes toward host countries (Kinging, 2008; Lehman, 2007; Davidson & Lehman, 2005; Dwyer, 2004; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Strangor et al., 1998; Brecht et al., 1993; Harpur, n.d.).

A limited number of studies have been conducted on the effect of foreign exchange programs on high school students. As detailed in the studies reviewed below, their findings suggest that foreign exchange programs have a similar positive impact on high school students. Participation in high school foreign exchange programs appears to have a significant and long-lasting impact on students' acquisition of foreign language skills and their intercultural and personal development. In addition, high school students who spend more time studying abroad develop even greater levels of foreign language proficiency than students who spend shorter amounts of time studying in a foreign country. One study found that study abroad experiences had the greatest impact on students who entered foreign exchange programs with lower levels of intercultural development, while another study reported that students who left home with more advanced language skills demonstrated the greatest psychological changes.

Research findings, however, should be viewed with caution. Since it is not possible to randomly assign students to treatment and control groups, fundamental differences may exist between students who choose to participate in foreign exchange programs and those who decide to remain in their home countries. Students who choose to study abroad may already have a broader world view or greater international understanding. Another problem with the research is that control groups were not formed according to established research protocol. In the majority of studies, exchange program alumni submitted the names of friends who had not studied abroad. A control group randomly selected by researchers and matched on key demographic variables would have increased the validity of these studies' findings. Finally, most studies relied on self-report measures that are not independently verifiable to draw conclusions about programs' impact on students (Issenmann, 2008; Sumka, 1999; Bachner & Zeuschel, 1994; Stitsworth & Sugiyama, 1990).

Studies conducted on the impact of high school foreign exchange programs on students' foreign language acquisition and on their personal and intercultural development are summarized below.

- AFS Intercultural programs (formerly known as American Field Service) researchers conducted an impact study that ran from 1980 to 1985. The study involved thousands of U.S. AFS one-year and short-term program students and measured their average self-reported change on a series of variables. Students assessed themselves before and after their AFS experience and their results were compared to a group of approximately 130 U.S. students who had applied to AFS but who did not participate in an AFS program. Five of the variables were found to have a strong relationship with the AFS experience: understanding of other cultures; awareness and appreciation of the host country and culture; foreign language appreciation and ability; international awareness; and adaptability. Students also reported that the AFS experience helped them to become less materialistic, more independent in their thinking, more aware of their own country's culture, better able to communicate with others, and better able to think critically (AFS Center for the Study of Intercultural Learning, 1993).

- Hammer (2005) studied over 1,500 AFS Intercultural Programs students from nine countries (Austria, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, and the U.S.) who participated in AFS' year-long high school exchange program during the 2002-03 school year. The control group was comprised of over 500 of the participants' friends, matched on age, gender, and socioeconomic status, who had not participated in the foreign exchange program. Results were based on administrations of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and surveys completed by students, students' parents, and host families. Analyses indicated that AFS alumni exhibited a significantly greater increase in cultural competence and knowledge of host cultures than the control group. AFS alumni developed friendships with people from other cultures to a significantly greater extent than the control group and were more at ease around people from other cultures.

AFS alumni reported that their foreign language skills were significantly higher than those of the control group, with almost half of the AFS students indicating that they had achieved advanced or bilingual levels of fluency in the host country language. Hammer also found that the AFS foreign exchange program was not equally effective for all students. Its primary impact was on students who entered the program with lower levels of intercultural development. The program had little impact on students who were more interculturally competent upon entry into the program.

- Hansel (2008) and Hansel and Chen (2008) studied the long-term impact of the AFS Intercultural Programs on 1,920 former AFS participants from 15 countries. Program alumni were surveyed 25 years after their return to their home countries. A group of 511 high school peers "nominated" by the AFS participants formed the control group. In addition to student surveys, focus groups were conducted and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was administered to all students. The researchers found a significant relationship between participation in the AFS program and foreign language fluency. Even 25 years later, AFS alumni reported that they were 20 percent more likely to speak and use a foreign language than their control group peers. The researchers also discovered a significant relationship between program length and achievement of language fluency, with 82 percent of full-year alumni but only 70 percent of two-month summer program alumni reporting that they were fluent in at least one foreign language.

AFS alumni stated that they were significantly more likely to strongly encourage their own children to meet people from other cultures and participate in foreign exchange programs than members of the control group. AFS alumni reported feeling significantly more comfortable around people from other cultures than the control group and significantly more likely to include people from other cultures in their professional and social networks. They also indicated that they were significantly more likely to seek jobs and professional opportunities involving other cultures.

- Bachner and Zeitschel (1994) examined the ways in which the Youth for Understanding (YFU) International Exchange program affected Germans and Americans who had studied abroad as high school students between 1951 and 1987. Completed surveys were received from 661 YFU alumni. A control group of 384 individuals also completed surveys. The control group was comprised of friends "nominated" by YFU alumni who were of similar age, gender, and educational background but who had not participated in a YFU exchange. The researchers concluded that participation in YFU resulted in meaningful, long-lasting changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors, based on YFU alumni's reports that they were more self-confident and had acquired additional resources for problem-solving and coping successfully in unfamiliar situations. Compared to the control group, both German and American YFU alumni reported greater knowledge and understanding of the host country, more advanced foreign language skills, and higher levels of involvement in social and political activities. In addition, YFU alumni reported that the exchange program had helped to clarify their personal and professional interests and strengths, often resulting in the selection of definite academic or career choices.

- Stitsworth and Sugiyama (1990) studied adolescent Japanese students who traveled to the U.S. for one month and stayed with host families as part of the 4-H Labo Exchange. The Labo Party is a Japanese youth organization that focuses on language acquisition and cultural exploration and culminates in a homestay in the U.S. Study participants included 426 Japanese students and their parents, as well as 285 control group students (names submitted by Labo participants of students who had not traveled to the U.S.) and their parents. Prior to the trip abroad and again upon their return, both Labo and control group students responded to a series of opposing adjectives that asked them to describe themselves on a continuum between two extremes (for example, independent/dependent and tolerant/intolerant); parents were asked to use the same adjectives to describe their children. Analysis of questionnaires indicated that Labo students judged themselves as significantly more social and extroverted than control group students following the exchange and Labo parents judged their children to be significantly more sociable, self-confident, competitive, informal, individualistic, and independent than control group parents after their exchange experience. The researchers concluded that Labo students demonstrated greater personal growth than similar students who had not traveled to the U.S.
- An earlier study conducted by Stitsworth (1988) compared 154 American teenagers who studied in Japan and 112 American teenagers who remained in the U.S. Results, based on administrations of the California Psychological Inventory, indicated that students who studied in Japan experienced a significantly higher increase in communality, flexibility, and independence. In addition, Stitsworth found that students with more knowledge of Japanese (three or more semesters of Japanese language classes prior to their trip abroad) demonstrated greater psychological changes than students with less prior experience in Japanese (one or two semesters).

The reader is reminded that research findings should be viewed with caution. The lack of random assignment to treatment and control groups, the unorthodox formation of control groups, and the reliance on unverifiable self-report measures all create questions regarding the validity of the reported findings.

Guidelines for Schools to Follow when Selecting Foreign Exchange Programs

As a rule, school districts do not sponsor student foreign exchange programs or provide any financial contributions to incoming or outbound students. However, some guidelines schools should consider when accepting foreign exchange students or encouraging their own students to study abroad are reviewed below.

- **Choose sponsoring organizations approved by the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET).** The CSIET is a non-profit organization that identifies reputable international youth exchange programs, establishes standards for international educational travel, and monitors compliance with those standards. When deciding which sponsoring organizations should be allowed to place students in a school district or which organizations should sponsor the district's own students in study abroad programs, districts should only consider organizations sponsored by the CSIET. CSIET's annual publication, the *CSIET Advisory List*, contains information about foreign exchange programs that have been evaluated and judged to meet CSIET standards. The list contains 70 international youth travel and exchange organizations. Each organization's listing provides the following information: a brief program description, countries served, cost estimates, financial aid opportunities, and complete contact information. The *CSIET Advisory List* is distributed annually to all high schools in the U.S. and is also available online at <http://www.csiet.org/publications-resources/publications/listed-programs.html>.
- **Work with sponsoring organizations that have clearly established goals.** Foreign exchange programs should provide valuable experiences that increase students' knowledge of and empathy toward other cultures as well as the desire to learn more about other cultures and nations. The organizations sponsoring foreign exchange students should have clearly established goals and learning objectives to fulfill the educational purposes of their programs. Goals and objectives should be communicated to school officials, teachers, parents, and students (Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, 2006; Loew, 1980).

- **Work with sponsoring organizations that are responsive to school staff.** Sponsoring organizations should maintain regular communication with school authorities and respond to complaints received from schools, students, or families in a timely fashion (Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, 2006; Hartman, 1995). The Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (2002) stated that schools should reserve the right to work only with exchange organizations that provide a high level of commitment and responsiveness.

The local representative of the sponsoring organization is responsible for guiding and monitoring students' placement in schools. Representatives should facilitate the completion of all applications and documents required to register students at their host schools, such as academic transcripts, documentation of English proficiency level, medical history and required immunization records, appropriate background information, and contact information for students' host families. Representatives should also notify principals and attendance clerks of any changes in host family or school status (Peninsula School District, 2009; Frederick County Public Schools, 2008; Washougal School District, 2008; Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, 2006; Bonneville Joint School District No. 93, 2005).

- **Evaluate sponsoring organizations on a regular basis.** Experts recommend that school districts conduct evaluations of foreign exchange programs on a regular basis (Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, 2002; Loew, 1980). Sponsoring agencies should be evaluated every three to five years on the following criteria:
 - the quality of program orientations provided to students, host families, and host schools;
 - the organization's ability to develop a satisfactory relationship with host schools;
 - the quality of accommodations arranged for students in host countries, including the selection and screening of host families;
 - the existence of a network of qualified and trained local representatives living in or near the community who are responsible for foreign exchange students' adjustment to their new surroundings and their personal well-being;
 - the levels of academic and social success achieved by participating students;
 - the provision of adequate accident and health insurance coverage for students traveling abroad; and
 - the quality of the organization's administrative staff and their financial status (including a full accounting of funds paid by participants and the percentage of fees charged to administrative costs).
- **Understand the district's responsibilities regarding foreign exchange students.** Host schools assume responsibility for foreign exchange students while they are attending classes and participating in extracurricular activities. Exchange students have all of the rights and privileges accorded to the district's own students and must adhere to the host school's policies, regulations, and standards of attendance and conduct. Host schools should make efforts to integrate foreign exchange students into the school community by encouraging them to participate in a variety of school activities and make a personal contribution to the school. For example, many schools ask students to give presentations about their home country in classrooms and to community groups (Peninsula School District, 2009; Frederick County Public Schools, 2008; Washougal School District, 2008; Bonneville Joint School District No. 93, 2005; Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, 2002; Hartman, 1995).
- **Ensure that students meet foreign exchange program qualifications.** All programs specify the qualifications that foreign exchange students, whether inbound or outbound, must meet in order to participate in a study abroad experience. The majority of high school exchange programs require students to be between the ages of 15 and 18 ½ and have not yet graduated from high school. Students must have adequate academic preparation and language proficiency to function successfully at their host school (Voice of America, 2008; Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, 2006).

Some programs recommend that students also demonstrate the following characteristics (Rotary International, 2008; Loew, 1980):

- social and emotional maturity;
 - ability to express themselves clearly and effectively;
 - self-confidence;
 - ability to adapt to changing surroundings; and
 - community leadership skills.
- **Decide how many foreign exchange students will be permitted to attend the district's schools.** The Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (2002) recommends that foreign exchange students make up one percent of a high school's total population, but recognizes that the number of students admitted into districts' high schools is a decision best left to each community, based on local school conditions. Most districts cap the percent of foreign exchange students admitted at between .5 and 1.0 percent of the high school's population and deny admittance to schools that are at or near capacity enrollment (Peninsula School District, 2009; Frederick County Public Schools, 2008; Washougal School District, 2008; Bonneville Joint School District No. 93, 2005; Brookings-Harbor School District, 2003; Bloomington Public Schools, 2000; Calvert County Public Schools, n.d.).
 - **Decide which services the school district will provide to foreign exchange students.** Foreign exchange students are defined as non-residents and visitors and school districts are therefore not obligated to provide them with extra services such as free or reduced price lunch, special education services, or tutoring. Exchange students are expected to make progress at a rate commensurate with domestic students and most districts do not provide instructional time over and above that which is offered to their own students. The majority of districts do not offer English as a second language services to foreign exchange students since they are expected to possess sufficient knowledge of the English language to function in the high school setting without the need for extra help. When tutoring or English as a second language assistance is needed, sponsoring organizations often make special arrangements with school districts that require students to accept financial responsibility for the services provided (Peninsula School District, 2009; Frederick County Public Schools, 2008; Washougal School District, 2008; Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, 2002; Hartman, 1995).
 - **Decide which academic requirements foreign exchange students will be expected to meet.** Upon arrival at the host high school, students meet with counselors to prepare an appropriate course schedule. Most school districts require foreign exchange students to enroll as full-time students and attend classes in English and U.S. History or U.S. Government. Students are graded and receive course credit based on district regulations (Peninsula School District, 2009; Frederick County Public Schools, 2008; Washougal School District, 2008; Bloomington Public Schools, 2000; Calvert County Public Schools, n.d.).

Foreign exchange students are not guaranteed the right to graduate or be granted diplomas. Although they receive credit for successful completion of course work, the majority of school districts do not award them with high school diplomas. Foreign exchange students are often allowed to participate in the host school's graduation ceremony but receive a certificate of attendance instead of a diploma (Peninsula School District, 2009; Frederick County Public Schools, 2008; Knox County Schools, 2008; Washougal School District, 2008; Bonneville Joint School District No. 93, 2005; Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, 2002; Calvert County Public Schools, n.d.).

- **Prepare students for differences in foreign educational systems.** Staff at home schools should prepare their students for the educational environment they will encounter when they study abroad. If inbound students have not been provided with information about their host high schools, staff at the new schools should take the time to orient students to any differences in the educational environment they are likely to encounter. Most foreign exchange students are academically equipped to succeed in their host countries' high schools, but an adjustment period is usually needed even for the highest performing

students. Students who are proficient in their host country's language usually still need a few weeks before they are able to communicate fluently in a second language. The high school experience may be very different than students are accustomed to, with longer or shorter classes and lunch breaks. High schools outside of the U.S. often have a more formal atmosphere, consisting primarily of teacher lecturing and student note-taking, and offer few of the extracurricular activities common at most American schools. In some countries, teachers, instead of students, move from classroom to classroom. American high school classrooms tend to be more informal, with cooperative learning groups and higher levels of student-teacher interaction (Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, 2009; Voice of America, 2008; Two Worlds United Educational Foundation, 2007).

Sample Foreign Exchange Programs

The organizations sponsoring foreign exchange students are responsible for guiding the entire process, including screening students and host families, submitting required paperwork to the host school, obtaining proper visa documents, ensuring that students have health and accident insurance coverage, and monitoring students for the duration of the exchange program (Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, 2009; Brookings-Harbor School District, 2003). The location to which the foreign exchange student travels and the length of time spent in the foreign country determine the cost of the program. Rotary International (2009) estimated that the average cost of a year-long exchange is approximately \$3,000.

There are over 70 foreign exchange programs operating within the U.S. Examples of some of the more popular programs include:

- **AFS Intercultural Programs.** AFS is a nonprofit organization that offers exchange programs to over 11,000 students each year. Students live with a host family and attend a local high school in one of over 50 countries for one academic year, one semester, or one trimester. AFS also offers summer and short-term (one to three month) programs that focus on the development of language skills and participation in community service and cultural activities (AFS Intercultural Programs, 2005). More information on AFS is available at http://www.afs.org/afs_or/home.
- **Nacel Open Door.** Nacel (2008) is a non-profit organization that operates foreign exchange programs in over 35 countries around the world. The organization offers full academic year and semester programs, as well as short-term summer and winter programs. Students, ages 13 to 18, live with host families and attend public or private high schools. In addition, Nacel has established an International School System of six private international high schools in five countries (China, Kenya, Poland, South Korea, and the U.S.), including one in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The schools educate students from countries around the world, utilizing a college preparatory internationally-focused curriculum, individualized learning, and small class sizes. More information on Nacel's Open Door program and International School System is available at <http://www.nacelopendoor.org/index.htm>.
- **Rotary Youth Exchange.** Rotary Clubs across the U.S. sponsor reciprocal foreign exchange programs. Students live with a host family and study at a high school abroad for one academic year. In return, a student from the destination country comes to live and study in the American student's community. Rotary Youth Exchange offers both long-term (one year) and short-term (several days to several weeks) programs. Over 8,000 high school students from 80 different countries participate in the exchange program every year (Rotary International, 2009). Rotary International's Youth Exchange Web site (<http://www.rotary.org/en/StudentsandYouth/YouthPrograms/RotaryYouthExchange/Pages/ridefault.aspx>) provides additional information and a Rotary Club Locator.

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs oversees a variety of short- and long-term foreign exchange programs designed to promote mutual understanding between the people of the U.S. and other countries (U.S. Department of State, 2009). Additional information on all of the programs summarized below is available at <http://exchanges.state.gov/jexchanges/programs/hsstudent.html>.

Long-Term U.S. Department of State Programs

- **American Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange (A-SMYLE).** A-SMYLE was developed to create stronger linkages between the U.S. and Serbia and Montenegro. The program provides scholarships to 255 high school students from Serbia and Montenegro to spend one academic year in the U.S., living with American host families and attending high school. Students also participate in leadership development activities, civic education, and community service.
- **Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) Program.** The CBYX program is jointly funded by the U.S. Congress, through the Department of State, and the German Bundestag and provides students with full scholarships for an academic year abroad. The program is a reciprocal exchange: students from the U.S. live with German host families and study at German high schools; German students live with American host families and attend American high schools. More than 17,000 German and American students have participated in the program since its inception in 1983.
- **Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX).** FLEX provides an opportunity for high school students from the countries of the former Soviet Union to experience life in a democratic society in order to promote democratic values and institutions in Eurasia. From 1993 to 2009, over 11,000 students from 12 Eurasian countries participated in the program. The U.S. Department of State awards grants to private, non-profit organizations to select students based on their English ability, academic achievement, social skills, and leadership potential. All students receive an extensive orientation to life in America, live with an American host family, and pursue a year-long course of study at an American high school.
- **Youth Exchange and Study (YES).** YES is a year-long program that sends U.S. students abroad to build international understanding between Americans and people in countries with significant Muslim populations. In exchange, foreign students from these countries study in the U.S. From 2003 to 2009, almost 3,500 students participated in the program. During the 2009-2010 academic year, approximately 1,000 students from 39 different countries will join the program. Participating countries include Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Turkey.

Short-Term U.S. Department of State Programs

- **Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows.** This three-week summer institute focuses primarily on the exploration of global issues through interactive activities, practical experiences, and other hands-on opportunities. Each institute includes 30 to 35 European and Eurasian youth and 10 American students. Students are nominated to attend the U.S.-based institutions by their respective U.S. embassies. The program is implemented by Wake Forest University and includes two institutes: one for students ages 15-17 and the other for students ages 17-19.
- **German American Partnership Program (GAPP).** GAPP is a short-term exchange program that links German and American high schools. Currently, there are approximately 760 active partnerships throughout the U.S. and Germany. Each year, approximately 5,000 American high school students and their teachers visit their partners in Germany and 8,000 German high school students and their teachers are hosted by American families and high schools. Visits are at least three weeks and provide academic, civic, and social exchange between students of the two countries. Students live with host families, attend classes, and travel around the host country. The program is funded by the Foreign Ministry of Germany, and U.S. Department of State, and GAPP program donors.

- **Linking Individuals, Knowledge, and Culture (LINC).** LINC provides intensive three to four week reciprocal exchanges between students in the U.S. and countries such as Bahrain, Bangladesh, China, Morocco, and Uganda. The number of students participating in the program ranges from six to 24, depending on the country. Students visit schools, participate in community service activities, and meet with community leaders. Each exchange addresses a specific theme, such as responsible governance and citizen activism; using arts and culture to foster inter-community dialogue; or science and technology.
- **National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y).** NSLI-Y offers merit-based scholarships to American high school students and just-graduated high school students to travel abroad and learn less commonly taught languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Hindi, Korean, Russian, and Turkish. Summer, semester, and full academic year immersion programs are offered. During the 2008-09 school year, 550 students participated in the full academic year immersion program. In 2009 and 2010, students will travel to China, Egypt, India, Jordan, Korea, Morocco, Russia, Tajikistan, and Turkey. A consortium, led by the American Councils for International Education, administers all aspects of the program.

The American Councils for International Education (2009) is an international non-profit organization that administers a variety of study abroad and cultural exchanges on behalf of both public and private funders. The organization is responsible for the administration of several U.S. Department of State foreign exchange programs, including A-SMYLE, FLEX, NSLI-Y, and YES. A full listing and descriptions of the American Councils' programs are available at <http://www.americancouncils.org/exTraining.php>. Examples of some of the Councils' high school programs include:

- **Olympiada Study Abroad Program.** This program selects the top performers in each state's and region's Olympiada (competitions of knowledge in spoken Russian) to take part in a four-week study abroad program. Approximately 15 students, ages 16 and older, are chosen to study and live with host families in Russia each year. The program focuses on language training and provides an introduction to the history, literature, and culture of Russia.
- **Secondary Academic Cultural Exchange (SACE).** SACE is a partnership of U.S. and Eurasian high schools. The program allows students to attend classes in their partner schools and live with host families for two to four weeks. Member schools are drawn from a pool of U.S. high schools that either teach Russian or emphasize Eurasian studies and Eurasian high schools that offer advanced English language study.
- **Semester/Academic Year Abroad Program.** This program offers U.S. high schools the opportunity to send eleventh and twelfth graders to Eurasia for an academic semester or year. U.S. students must be nominated and recommended by their schools in order to qualify for the program and it is recommended that they have taken at least two prior years of Russian language.
- **Summer English Language Program.** This program allows Eurasian students ages 13 to 19 to spend two to six weeks living with host families in the U.S. Students can choose among 15 different types of study programs. All programs feature formal language instruction and a cultural component that includes local excursions.
- **Summer in Russia's Golden Ring.** The Golden Ring program allows high school students to travel to Russia and live with host families for four weeks during the summer to attend intensive Russian language and area studies classes. Students also participate in cultural excursions around the cities of Russia's historic Golden Ring.
- **U.S. Poland Parliamentary Youth Leadership Exchange Program.** This program is a four-week exchange that focuses on civic education and leadership. Thirty high school students and four educators from Poland and the U.S. (15 students and two teachers from each country) participate in the exchange

each year. Program features include high school exchanges, host family stays, civic education workshops, presentations to classes and civic groups in host communities, a community service project, and cultural excursions.

Summary

High school foreign exchange programs allow students to live and study in a country other than their own to learn another language and a new culture. A review of the research conducted on high school foreign exchange programs found that they appear to have a significant and long-lasting impact on students' acquisition of foreign language skills and their intercultural and personal development. In addition, students who spend longer periods of time studying abroad develop even higher foreign language proficiency levels than students who spend shorter amounts of time in a foreign country. However, research findings should be viewed with caution. None of the studies randomly assigned students to treatment and control groups and the majority of studies did not form control groups according to established protocol and relied on unverifiable self-report measures. Additional studies should be conducted to substantiate the findings reported to date. Guidelines that school districts should follow when accepting foreign exchange students or encouraging their own students to study abroad were reviewed, such as working only with sponsoring organizations approved by the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, evaluating sponsoring organizations on a regular basis, preparing students for differences in foreign educational systems, and deciding which academic requirements foreign exchange students will be expected to meet. Brief descriptions of some of the more popular foreign exchange programs operating within the U.S. were also provided.

All reports distributed by Research Services can be accessed at <http://drs.dadeschools.net>.

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