



FOREIGN EXCHANGE PROGRAM

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Academe of the Oaks Foreign Exchange Program offers a unique opportunity for our high school students. Through this program, students greatly expand their worldview by delving into the language and culture of another country for a period of time. Going on an exchange is both exciting and challenging for high school students, as they find themselves in a completely different setting. This strengthens their self-reliance, helps them become more independent, and increases their confidence in their ability to meet new challenges.

One of the central aims for an exchange is to gain fluency in the chosen foreign language. Please be aware that it might be difficult to follow all the academic course work of the chosen school due to insufficient skill in the language. For this reason we do not approve exchange duration of more than three months. A longer exchange could result in your student falling behind academically.

The best time for an exchange is the 10th grade year, and in some situations, also the very beginning of the 11th grade year. Applications for an exchange must be turned in to Ms. Karma Sanchez, our Foreign Exchange Program Coordinator, by November 15 during the 9th grade school year. Academe of the Oaks takes great care in assessing a student's readiness for an exchange, with the intention of assuring that the student will enjoy the experience and thrive.

It is a big step for a student and family to engage in an exchange program, and many considerations are involved in the decision. The following information is meant to assist you in your decision making process.

- **PASSPORT/VISA:**

When first considering an exchange, even if you are still uncertain as to whether your son or daughter is ready for such a program, begin the application process for a current passport and/or visa. This process can take longer than expected. It is better to begin the process to obtain the passport and/or visa, even if they eventually go unused, than to be approved and not be able to get the passport/and or visa on time. Contact the consulate of the country your child is interested in visiting to obtain their visa requirements – each country has different requirements and some can be lengthy.

- **APPROVAL FOR EXCHANGE:**

Applications for the exchange are reviewed and approved by the Leadership Group in consultation with the faculty. Approval is based on academic good standing, personal readiness, and social maturity. In addition, the business office requires that tuition and fee accounts are in good standing. Parents agree to pay tuition for the duration of the exchange.

- **ACADEMIC MAKE-UP WORK:**

Academe of the Oaks requires that students going on exchange check with their advisor regarding which academic classes need to be made up in order to meet the credit requirements. Students will also have the opportunity to work on school work before their departure, depending on the time of the exchange.

- **EXCHANGE PARTNER:**

Please support your son or daughter in their exchange plans by closely following their application process, and engaging in communication with the exchange partner's family once it is identified. Arranging for exchange partners and facilitating this communication is not the responsibility of the school, because developing this relationship is essential for the family. Your son or daughter will correspond with his/her exchange partner, and it will be very beneficial if you also correspond with the exchange partner's family, as this is the family your child may be living with and spending time with abroad.

Getting to know the exchange partner is also very valuable for you, as you will better understand his or her motivations in joining your family and in coming to the United States.

As a parent, you are responsible for choosing and assessing whether the exchange partner and his or her family will be a good match for your family, as Academe of the Oaks does not engage in any screening of potential exchange families. You may discover that the family you are in conversation with is not forthcoming enough for you – this could possibly raise concerns that communications during the exchange would be challenging. Or you may indentify that some family values are so different that it would be difficult for you to understand and adapt to them. You may realize in mid-process that it would be best to choose another family for your son or daughter’s exchange. It is always best to proceed carefully rather than to rush into a quick arrangement that may be difficult to deal with once the exchange takes place.

Even after regular correspondence and careful choosing, it is probable that your son or daughter and his or her exchange partner will be quite different from each other. It is good to be aware of your own expectations and to be upfront about them. For example, do you expect the exchange partner to join in your daily family life, go on outings with you, to participate in household chores? These details are important to finalizing your decision.

The process of applying for an exchange may feel time-consuming, but it is well worth the effort. The Leadership Group, administration, and Foreign Exchange Program Coordinator are eager to support you in accomplishing the worthy goal of a successful exchange for your son or daughter.