

TO: ALL LEA

FROM: Thomas P. Carey, Ed.D.
Deputy Secretary for Elementary/Secondary Education

I am writing to discuss an issue that has emerged recently related to the requirements of the Chapter 4 regulations and federal law regarding those foreign exchange students who require English as a second language(ESL)instruction. I understand that a few school districts have expressed reluctance in participating in foreign student exchange programs due to instructional costs that could arise associated with the provision of ESL instruction to foreign exchange students who are not proficient in the English language. This memo outlines some suggestions that school districts may use to address this and other concerns about student foreign exchange programs.

The Department of Education strongly encourages school districts' participation in foreign student exchange programs. Foreign student exchange programs not only give the foreign students an opportunity to experience our culture and improve their English language skills, it provides our students a gateway to other cultures and the diversity this world has to offer. Beginning these friendships can reap life-long benefits for both exchange students and the students and staff who host them. Given the unfortunate events of this past year, intercultural understanding is more important than ever.

We recommend that school districts carefully select the exchange programs from which they will accept students. The U.S. Department of State approves many exchange programs and directly sponsors others - a listing of these programs is available on the Department of State web site, which is attached to this memo. In addition the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET) publishes an annual listing of accredited foreign exchange programs that meet established criteria. CSIET shares the listing with all high schools throughout the United States. CSIET's website link as well as links to other resources are also included as an attachment to this memo.

Foreign exchange students who are not English language proficient, like all other students who are limited English proficient, must be provided ESL services as appropriate. The requirements for providing these services are addressed in Basic Education Circular 22 Pa Code 4.26 Educating Student With Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and English Language Learners (ELL).

A number of resources and strategies are available to school districts in educating foreign exchange students with limited English proficiency.

Funding

* Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act establishes a competitive grant program that helps school districts with the initial costs of establishing or expanding an ESL or bilingual program. The Department of Education will be issuing information about this program later this year.

* If the Home Language Survey (required by PA to identify ELLs per regulation of OCR, Civil Rights Act, Title VI, Language Minority Compliance Procedures, establishes the student's primary language is other than English, an assessment designed for ELLs must be given to establish the student's proficiency. The results of an acceptable assessment taken within six months of the student's arrival may be used by the school district to determine the student's instructional needs and placement.

* Students traveling on an F-1 visa must submit an I-20 form to the school district prior to arrival. This form estimates the costs for the student's tuition. We recommend you include the estimated costs of the ESL/bilingual program in "Other" on this form.

* Students traveling on a J-1 visa have an IAP-66 (soon to be DF-2029) form completed by the program sponsor that requires an estimated financial support total that may include the cost of ESL/bilingual program costs at the school district in which the student will be living.

School Board Policy

* Establish school board policy that may include:

1. limiting the number of foreign exchange visitors,
2. establishing an application deadline for exchange programs, or
3. requiring the organization to agree to pay the ESL/bilingual education costs with specific limits and costs clearly delineated.

Staffing

* Any certified teacher with an Instructional I or II certificate employed as a temporary professional or professional or part-time teacher may teach ESL; it does not have to be someone with fluency in the student's language.

We believe school district participation in foreign student exchange programs provides numerous benefits to the exchange students, students and staff they have contact with, host families and the entire community. It helps to increase awareness of global issues, improves intercultural knowledge and sensitivity, provides interpersonal relationship building and builds personal values and skills.

We hope these suggestions and other creative strategies will help you take full advantage of the benefits that foreign student exchange programs offer and to not use the ESL requirement as an excuse for not participating in exchange programs.

Additional information is available on the following websites:

Pennsylvania Department of Education:
www.pde.state.pa.us <<http://www.pde.state.pa.us>>

Basic Education Circulars:

22 Pa Code 4.26 Educating Students with Limited English Proficiency
www.pde.state.pa.us/k12/cwp/view.asp?A=11&Q=45272

24 P.S. 13-1302 Foreign Students' Eligibility for Enrollment
www.pde.state.pa.us/k12/cwp/view.asp?A=11&Q=54260

U.S. Department of State approved exchange programs:

<http://exchanges.state.gov/jvisa/J%20Exchange%20Visitor%20Program/index.htm>

U.S. Department of State sponsored exchange programs:

<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/citizens/students/factsheet.htm>

Council on Standards for International Educational Travel:

www.csiet.org <<http://www.csiet.org>>

Pennsylvania School Boards Association

www.pgba.org <<http://www.pgba.org>>