



# Huron-Superior Catholic

## DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

#### SCOPE OF THE POLICY AND PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES:

1. These procedural guidelines and its associated policy pertain only to students who wish to enter the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board (HSCDSB). They do not pertain to existing students of the Board who may wish to access education internationally.
2. According to the Ministry of Education, all publicly funded school boards that receive international students for in-person instruction must adhere to all federal and provincial requirements. As per the regulations under the “Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020:
  - A school within the meaning of the Education Act may provide in-person teaching or instruction to a person who holds a study permit issued under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada) and who enters Canada on or after November 17, 2020 only if the school has a plan respecting COVID-19 that has been approved by the Minister of Education; and operates in accordance with the approved plan.
3. Elementary international students are defined as pupils who are admitted to Canada with the purpose of having a short-term experience of a different country, culture, or language (e.g., a six-week cultural immersion). The purpose of such an experience is to expand students’ insights into another culture, religion, geographic area, and/or language. Although these elementary students may participate in classes, school-based activities, and/or community-based activities, their prime purpose is not to meet Ontario curriculum expectations, and thus, their academic performance will not be assessed or evaluated unless specific arrangements with the school have been made in advance.
4. Secondary international students fall into two categories: those who seek a short-term cultural experience and those who seek a longer-term academic experience.
  - a) Secondary international students who seek a short-term cultural experience (e.g., a four-week cultural immersion) may participate in classes, school-based activities, and/or community-based activities, but their academic performance will not be assessed or evaluated unless specific arrangements with the school have been made in advance.
  - b) Secondary international students who seek a longer-term academic experience (e.g., study at the Grade 12 level in the pursuit of an Ontario Secondary School Diploma with the goal of entering an Ontario post-secondary institution) are expected to participate in all facets of school life, including, but not limited to, classes, religious celebrations, and assemblies. Their academic progress and performance will be documented, assessed, and evaluated.

In all cases, secondary students must be qualified to attend secondary school in Ontario as outlined in the *Education Act*.

## COLLABORATION WITH THIRD-PARTY AGENCIES

In some cases, international students may elect to become pupils of the Board because they have family members living in Ontario. For example, students who live in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan may have relatives living in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. In such cases, third-party agencies are not likely to be involved.

However, the Board recognizes that many international students, particularly those from Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America, are recommended through a third-party agency and may be coming into the Board unattended. The Board remains open to working with a variety of such agencies, and will do so based on the following premises:

1. **Successful Reference Checks** – In the event that a specific agency approaches the Board about an international education opportunity, the Board will practise due diligence and conduct appropriate reference checks. The agency's record of ensuring student safety and providing service to students and their families will be a prime focus of these checks. Special consideration will be provided to agencies with strong connections to Sault College and/or Algoma University.
2. **Custodianship** – Agencies are entirely responsible for arranging for and/or accepting custodianship for the students in their care. The Board will not and cannot accept responsibility for the safety of students outside of regular school hours. All custodians are expected to furnish the Board with evidence of a successful vulnerable sector check in advance of students' arrival in Canada, and must accept all responsibility for students' care and well-being, including, but not limited to, health / medical matters, nutrition, personal safety, legal matters, finances, contact with home, emotional well-being, and cultural transition.
3. **Elementary Chaperone(s)** – It is expected that all elementary students will be assigned one or more chaperones who accompany them as they travel to and from the board's boundaries (e.g., chaperone on a flight to and from Sault Ste. Marie).
4. **Rich Out-of-School Cultural Experiences** – Agencies involved in arranging short-term cultural immersion experiences are expected to provide a variety of rich cultural experiences beyond the school day and week (e.g., trips to local sites, events, and attractions). These experiences are intended to augment the experiences international students might have during the regular school day and keep them engaged in Canadian culture in the evenings, on weekends, and on holidays.
5. **Purchasing Procedures** – The Board will follow all appropriate policies and procedures related to procurement, including those related to the procurement of international education services.

## HOMESTAY ARRANGEMENTS

International students can benefit greatly from spending time in the homes of local families. Such stays often provide tremendous insight into the foods, customs, practices, traditions, and festivals of people from the area. Agencies who arrange for homestays are expected to follow these procedures. Additional details are provided in **Appendix A – Recommended Practices for Agencies Arranging Homestay**:

1. **Multi-Person Households** – For safety reasons, where at all possible, international students will stay in the homes of local families or couples, rather than in the homes of single people. Where no families or couples are willing to accept international students, more than one international student should be placed in the home. This is intended to protect the safety of the students. Note: where the homestay location is the dwelling of a family member (e.g., an older sibling attending college) or close family friend, an exception may be made.
2. **Matching** - Where possible, students should be matched with a family based on their age, gender, and/or interests. For example, a female international elementary student might be better placed with a Canadian family with two young daughters, rather than three adolescent sons.
3. **Homestay Pre-Visits** – All families who are considering accepting an international student into their homes must be visited at least once in advance by the agency. The agency must provide pertinent information about the student (e.g., allergies, fear of dogs, hard of hearing); the student's culture (e.g., touching the top of the head is not permitted, is forbidden to eat pork, cannot dance), and homestay itself (e.g., scope of responsibilities). Where possible, homestay families should sign a contract that clearly delineates all that is expected of them.
4. **Home Inspections** – All families who accept an international student into their homes must have their homes inspected by the agency at least once a month while the student is living there. These visits are intended to ensure such things as cleanliness and student safety and comfort. In the event that the agency feels that the home environment is inappropriate for the student, s/he will remove the student and arrange for an alternative setting as soon as possible.

### EXPECTATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

All international students, regardless of the length of time they are with the Board and/or their purpose for attending its schools (e.g., cultural immersion experience vs. academic experience), are expected to abide by specific rules and regulations, as outlined in what follows:

1. **Admission Procedures** – The Director of Education is responsible for making decisions related to the approval of international students. All secondary international students who are granted admission to HSCDSB will receive a Letter of Acceptance signed by the Director of Education. See **Form A – Sample Letter of Acceptance**.
2. **Transition and Orientation Packages / Programs** – The Board provides all international students with a transition and orientation package and/or program before and/or upon arrival at the school. These packages / programs contain materials and activities related to the school, program, courses, community, and culture that the students are entering. They also provide information about various supports available to students throughout their stay in Canada. Agencies are responsible for ensuring that international students are familiar with these materials upon entering the program.
3. **Tuition** – All international elementary or secondary students, whether pursuing an academic and/or cultural experience, are required to pay the relevant tuition associated with their stay. Tuition amounts are set by the Ministry of Education and based on length of stay and program of study. Any additional costs (e.g., tutor, nurse) must be covered by the international student and/or his/her family.

4. **Rules and Regulations** – Agencies are expected to ensure that all international students are familiar with, and abide by, all school, Board, municipal, provincial, and federal rules and regulations, including but not limited to vaccinations. Failure to do so may result in contact with home / custodian, suspension, expulsion, or legal consequences (e.g., failing to wear seatbelts while in a car might result in a fine, driving under the influence of alcohol might result in a fine or imprisonment). **Form B – Sample Letter of Expectations** is to be provided to and signed by the international student and his/her family.

#### EXPECTATIONS OF SCHOOLS AND THE BOARD

1. **Awareness** – In the event that employees of HSCDSB schools are approached by an agency to accept one or more international students, they must make their school Superintendent aware of this request, so that proper protocols can be followed.
2. **Voluntary Acceptance of Elementary International Students** – The Board recognizes that providing international elementary students with a short-term cultural experience all day for several weeks at a time can be both enriching and challenging. For this reason, no elementary teacher will be assigned international students without his/her permission. Secondary principals will work in collaboration with their teachers to determine the optimum placements for international students seeking a short-term cultural experience. Those secondary students seeking an academic experience will be placed in courses that match their interests, aptitudes, and/or post-secondary aspirations.
3. **Culturally Appropriate Professional Learning** – The Board recognizes that teachers can best meet students' needs when they know them well. Culture is an important part of understanding why students might think, speak, or behave in a specific way (e.g., averting one's eyes in some cultures is considered to be a sign of respect). With this in mind, the Board will work in collaboration with agencies to provide a professional learning package to all teachers who work with international students. Where possible, the package will be culturally specific.
4. **Assessment of Linguistic Abilities and Academic Credentials** – The Board recognizes that international students come to us with a variety of skills, abilities, and experiences. It is incumbent upon the school accepting these students to conduct a thorough assessment of students' international transcripts and linguistic abilities before placing them in classes. This is especially important at the secondary school level, where students have access to a variety of course types and where there may be discrepancies between students' post-secondary aspirations, their level of language acquisition, and/or prerequisite knowledge.
5. **Assistance with Transition to Post-Secondary Pathways** – The Board acknowledges that many secondary international students may opt to enter our system in order to familiarize themselves with Ontario educational standards and ease their transition to college and/or university. Secondary staff members agree to assist international students in making healthy connections with local institutions and/or opportunities (e.g., Sault College, Algoma University) and helping them make a full transition to their selected post-secondary pathway.