



Thursday, April 23, 2020

Dear U.S. High School Administrators,

For the first time in modern history, we are experiencing a major global humanitarian challenge that all of humanity is working hand-in-hand to overcome. In some cases, it seems that COVID-19 has taken from us more than we can bear, and asked of us more than we can provide. Yet amidst the fear, turmoil and global divisions, somehow we have found ways to stay connected. Perhaps one of the best ways to stay engaged and connected on a global scale is International Youth Exchange. What better way for the global youth of today to meet the global challenges of tomorrow than building bridges of cross-cultural understanding!

Since 1984, the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET) and its certified exchange organizations have operated on the firm belief that safe and reputable Youth Exchange provides schools with a concrete means to increase diversity, strengthen instruction, and build programs that imbue students with global competence. Below are just a few of the benefits of Youth Exchange:

1. Schools that leverage inbound and outbound Youth Exchange are not confined by traditional curricular constructs, but rather, they are empowered by their desire to teach students to navigate the challenges of an increasingly global society. These 21st century schools are well equipped to sustain themselves as viable places of learning.
2. Classroom instruction becomes more dynamic in a variety of content areas such as history, world languages and language arts as exchange students add diverse perspectives to classroom discussions. Educators that engage exchange students in their instruction are modeling inclusive classroom practices.
3. Students who participate in Youth Exchange are called upon to demonstrate growth and maturity. They think critically about other cultures and their own. Whether hosting an exchange student or participating in a program of study abroad, those students who engage in Youth Exchange attain a 21st century skill set that includes, but is not limited to the following:
 - Improved communication
 - Improved problem solving capability
 - Greater knowledge and awareness of other cultures, traditions and customs
 - Improved sense of self and purpose
 - Greater capacity to engage in shared projects
 - Improved critical thinking
4. Host families are universally enriched by the presence of exchange students in their communities. These students share language, culture and common traditions over meals, vacations, holidays and special occasions. As a result, exchange students and their families often develop positive relationships that endure well into adult life.

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Additionally, CSIET and its certified organizations believe that students who participate in Youth Exchange are more inclined to continue their studies in college. Their level of maturity permits them to identify career goals earlier than their peers, thus bringing about improved learning environments, lower attrition and higher graduation rates.

As you look toward your next school year, please continue to enrich your community's global competence by working with [CSIET's certified exchange organizations](#). The 2020-2021 school year is likely to bring special challenges. CSIET has a strong history of cooperation and collaboration with US high schools such as yours. To that end, CSIET certified programs stand ready to collaborate with you to ensure the safe and seamless integration of J-1 exchange visitors into your communities.

Thank you and we look forward to continuing our journey together as we navigate the next weeks, months and years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher B. Page". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christopher B. Page
CSIET Executive Director