
A Guide for J-1 Exchange Programs in Baldwin County Public Schools



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Welcome... Bienvenue... Willkommen

Welcome to Baldwin County Public Schools! Since 1799, our school district has worked to provide a quality education in a world-class learning environment with a goal to prepare students to be successful and responsible global citizens. As part of our mission to engage our students, the Baldwin County Board of Education (BCBE) is pleased to welcome foreign exchange students as members of our school community. In an effort to ease the transition for these students, we have developed this guide to outline our policies and procedures for placement as well as our expectations for a positive relationship with sponsoring programs.

Guidelines for Sponsoring Exchange Programs and Local Coordinators

Baldwin County Public School district has seven traditional high schools. Each high school will have a maximum of five spots for exchange students that will be filled on a first come, first served basis. The district will not hold or reserve spots for any local coordinator or agency. If an accepted student's application is withdrawn (e.g., student or host family changed their mind), the agency does not retain that student's spot but must reapply with the new student's application.

Please note that once a student has arrived, the student will not be allowed to change to another school within the district and must attend the high school their host family is zoned to attend.

In order to place students in Baldwin County Public Schools, sponsoring programs and local coordinators must meet the following standards:

- Must be a full member in good standing with The Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET).
- Must consistently adhere to the Baldwin County Board of Education exchange program policy and procedures.
- Baldwin County Board of Education only accepts students with a J-1 Visa as our schools are not authorized to accept students participating in F-1 programs.
- Exchange programs **must** have a local coordinator who resides in Baldwin County, AL and who will be responsible for the students placed in the district's schools.

Sponsoring agencies will provide Baldwin County with complete contact information of the local coordinator, including address, phone number, and email. One coordinator will be the point of contact for the system.

- If multiple local coordinators for the same program reside in the county, one must be listed as the point of contact between the district and the program. This designee will be the individual authorized to submit enrollment requests to the district and will receive responses from district personnel regarding placements.
- Baldwin County Public Schools will not approve a placement to a temporary, welcome, or arrival host family. Local coordinators are expected to seek out permanent host families who are ready, committed, and fully prepared to host the exchange student for the entire academic year.

Guidelines for Exchange Students

As program coordinators are selecting students for placement, they need to keep the following expectations in mind:

- Students cannot have graduated from or otherwise completed the required educational programming in their home country.
- Students will not be classified as seniors (12th grade) nor will they be eligible to participate in graduation ceremonies. This needs to be communicated to all prospective students by the sponsoring program to avoid any confusion.
- Students must be at least 15 years old and no older than 17 years old on September 02 of the enrollment year.
- The district understands that there will be some language barriers however, the student is expected to be proficient in both written and verbal English so they can be successful in all coursework.
 - An ELTiS Score of 4 or 5 or other equivalent English testing form required
- Students will be assigned a full course load including English, History, Science, and Mathematics. Students are expected to maintain at least a “C” (70+) in each course, including electives, throughout their exchange year in order to retain their placement in the school.
- Students are expected to abide by the policies and rules of the school, district, and the Alabama State Department of Education. Exchange students who are noncompliant will not be permitted to continue their program year in Baldwin County Public Schools.
- Only full year students will be considered for placement in Baldwin County Public Schools.
- Students must attend the school that their host family is zoned to attend (i.e., If the host family lives in the Fairhope school zone, the student will attend Fairhope High School). If a student must move host families during their exchange year, the new host family must reside within the original school zone and the local coordinator must notify Mrs. Stephanie Montiel (smontiel@bcbe.org) immediately of the change in status.

Application Procedures

The application period is **March 01 to July 01** to be considered for enrollment for the following school year. No applications will be considered outside of this date range.

Sponsoring agencies, local coordinators, and potential host families are not to contact the school's principal directly during the application process about signing paperwork.

- All applications must be submitted to Mrs. Stephanie Montiel (smontiel@bcbe.org) via email. No faxed applications will be accepted nor will the district log into a separate system to access application materials.
- Each application should be sent in a separate email. One email should not contain multiple applications.
- The application should be complete and should include at least **two references** for the student along with their English language proficiency results. The entire application and all supporting documents should be in English.
- The application and all supporting documents will be reviewed at the central office. The application will be forwarded to the school principal for approval only after the district's program coordinator has approved the application. If the principal approves the application, the district's program coordinator will return it to the designated local exchange coordinator. Do not contact the school's principal during this process.
- Please allow three weeks for the application to be reviewed by the district's program coordinator and principal and to be returned to the designated local exchange coordinator.